

GUNNING FOR SYRIA ■ WOODS vs. BOOT ■ RED STATE REBELLION

MARCH 28, 2005

The American Conservative

NATAN SHARANSKY



WHO IS THIS MAN?

**WHY ARE HIS IDEAS
GUIDING U.S. POLICY?**

SLAYER OF STRAW MEN

Having wasted my time reading Robert Locke's "Marxism of the Right" (March 14), I found myself laughing and crying out loud. Locke performs the oldest trick in the demagogue's book: erect a straw man embodying characteristics one finds reprehensible, and then demonstrate that these attributes are, in fact, reprehensible. Far be it from the slayer of straw men to prove that any person or group actually embraces or exhibits these traits. The demagogues' self-satisfaction comes from first attributing to his enemy those detestable features (a pleasure in itself), and then self-righteously condemning both the enemy and its supposed defects (exhilarating righteous fury). Locke excels in such "argumentation" and condemnation.

For a publication of nominally serious policy discussion, *TAC* has dropped the ball by devoting substantial space to Locke's diatribe. There may indeed be serious flaws in mainstream libertarian philosophy and prescriptive social constructs, as elucidated by recognized libertarian writers and speakers. It may be that even without serious internal contradiction or conflict with documented human experience, libertarianism is not a philosophy or set of societal organizing principles attractive to traditional American political conservatives or classical liberals. Whatever the case, one will find no rational basis for embracing or rejecting libertarianism in Locke's fulminations.

DICK THOMPSON

Joplin, Mo.

INFANTILE IDEOLOGY

You ask, "Libertarianism: A Home for Conservatives?" Are you kidding? Robert Locke has the libertarian number. In his "Marxism of the Right," Locke shows that libertarianism is a dead-end street. It is a soulless, sophomoric philosophy that adores not God but radical individualism. It also fails to recognize that man is a social being. Such a philosophy

is not in sync with human nature, thus making it a political impracticability.

Fortunately, libertarians are not the threat to the Republic that their Marxist mirror images on the Left are. At worst, all libertarians can do is throw a few close elections here or there by either going the third-party route or staying home on election day.

Therefore, the right question to ask is, "can libertarians find a home in the conservative movement?" I think the answer is a qualified "yes." If they choose, libertarians can do detailing for positions like trade-offs in free trade, marginal tax rates, etc. But the hollowness of the libertarian soul would prohibit them from having a seat at the table where strategic matters of importance are decided for the nation. Sorry to break their hearts, but libertarians have to grow up before more responsibility can be entrusted to their hands.

PETER SKURKISS

Stow, Ohio

ENEMY OF MY ENEMY

Scott McConnell's "Hunger for Dictatorship" is an excellent article (Feb. 14). As a progressive/liberal-minded person, I feel the full weight of those who consider me to be un-American because I dare to stand in opposition to the Bush administration. I have seen fascist tendencies grow more powerful every day since Bush took office, and it is worse now, considering that W. and his followers are thoroughly convinced that the last election validated their questionable goals and methods.

I've often said that the more traditional conservatives share many of the same complaints of the Bush administration as do progressives and liberals. Your magazine is a breath of fresh air and is the most hopeful sign I have seen in quite awhile that this country can one day heal from its self-inflicted wounds. I can live with the honest differences between liberals and conservatives, but these neocons have gone completely off the deep end, and our nation's democ-

racy is truly in jeopardy as a result. Watching so many Americans become true believers of this dangerous movement is frightening. How did we get here?

ADAM TAMBONE

Portland, Maine

LEADING BY EXAMPLE?

I just completed reading Scott McConnell's article. Supporters of the president are now "hungry to bomb foreigners," "maniacal lovers of the state," "eager to smash those who object"? All this in a magazine with the name *The American Conservative*? Please. I do not read your publication for vicious, left-wing, hate-filled, diatribes by naïve pacifist America-haters.

Respectfully,

HAL PIERCE

Via e-mail

WHINE & CHEESE

Who do you want to have in charge? Consider the big picture. In 2000 we were given the choice between Gore and Bush. 2004 was 100 times worse with Kerry and Bush. I do not even want to think what condition we would be in at this moment if either of the democratic choices would have been elected to the highest office in the land.

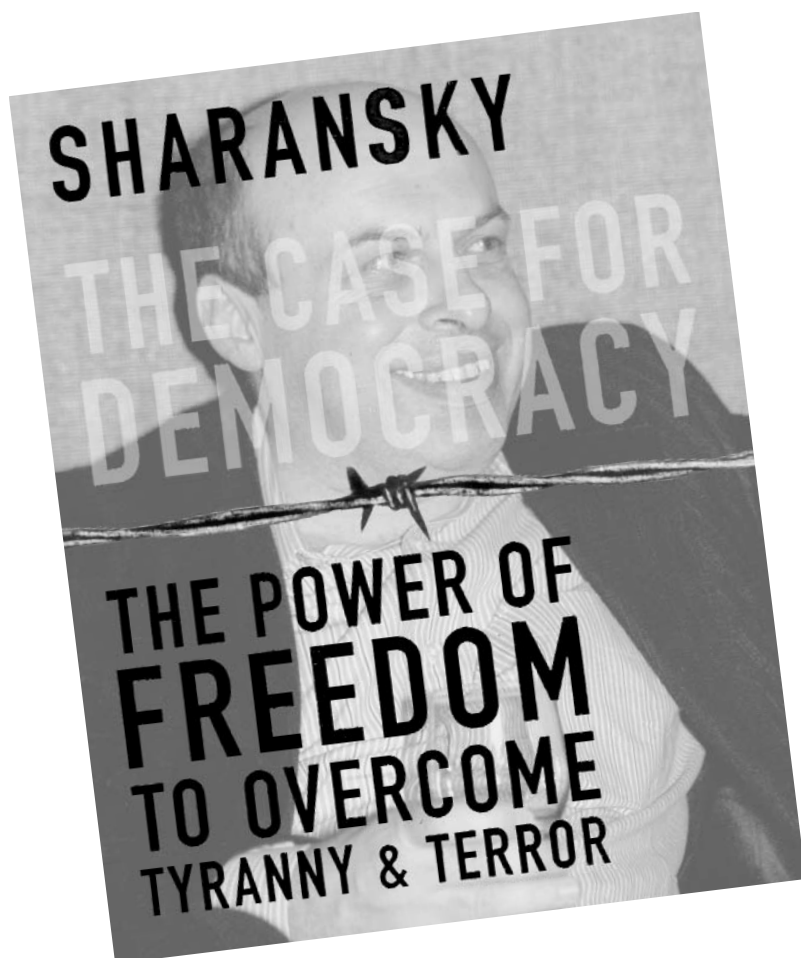
President Bush has a tremendous job without sore losers whining. Bashing Bush every time you get a chance is not helping anyone.

We are conservatives who reserve our votes for those we consider capable of doing the best job. Whining shows lack of integrity. Promote freedom.

TOM & KAREN SCHINDLER

Via e-mail

The American Conservative welcomes letters to the editor. Submit by e-mail to letters@amconmag.com, by fax to 703-875-3350, or by mail to 1300 Wilson Blvd., Suite 120, Arlington, VA 22209. Please include your name, address, and phone number. We reserve the right to edit all correspondence for space and clarity.



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[MIDEAST]

MAN OF PEACE?

Speaking in Brussels, President Bush declared Mideast peace “an immediate goal.” He added that Israel must “freeze settlement activity” and that a Palestinian state made up “of scattered territories”—the kind of Bantustan plan preferred by some on the Israeli Right —“will not work.” This is exactly what a president must say if he is serious about peace. We hope he follows through.

Ariel Sharon—once described as a “man of war” in these pages—has been acting as if he might now understand that Israel’s interests would be served by a just peace with the Palestinians. Consequently, there are glimmers of progress on many fronts—a ceasefire with the Palestinian Authority, the Palestinian elections, the decision to withdraw Israeli settlements from Gaza, the return of Egyptian and Jordanian ambassadors to Israel. Thus far a murderous terror assault in Tel Aviv has not derailed the process.

The fact that Sharon might be serious about moving toward a settlement is underscored by the ugly reaction from the Israeli settler movement. Some Israeli ministers have received death threats from extremist settler groups, and Sharon had to post guards by his wife’s gravesite after settler activists threatened to desecrate it. The invective now leveled against Sharon and his ministers reminds some of the venom the settler movement spewed at Yitzhak Rabin before he was assassinated.

The settlers—many of them born and raised in the United States—are now as much a part of the volatile Mideast extremist mix as the loopy Saudi fundamentalist cleric or Palestinian intifadist. But they can be politically isolated. Both Sharon and Abu Mazen have solid majorities of their peoples on their side. It is not yet clear whether Sharon contemplates going beyond a relatively



easy Gaza withdrawal and will work towards a realistic final settlement or whether Abu Mazen can control the Palestinian groups who reject any peace with Israel. But with a strong push from the United States, peace in Israel and Palestine, so necessary for the peoples there and so vital for America’s own security, once again has real prospects.

[ECONOMICS]

READ HIS LIPS

President Bush’s fiscal legacy has been typified by staggering spending and rising red ink, but up until now economic conservatives have had one consolation—at least he’s held the line on taxes. This too may pass.

When Bush first outlined his plan to revamp the Social Security system, he promised he would not finance it by raising taxes. Read his lips. The president has since told reporters that while he is still ruling out a hike in the payroll-tax rate, he is willing to consider increasing the income levels at which this tax applies.

The 12.4 percent payroll tax currently applies only to the first \$90,000 of wages. Raising this ceiling by definition increases taxes. If the cap were eliminated entirely, 9.2 million Americans would see their tax bills rise and marginal tax rates for top-bracket wage-

earners would hover near 50 percent. The revenue gains would be minor—the Social Security Administration estimates the change would only extend the system’s surpluses by seven years. Wasn’t the point of Social Security reform to shrink government and promote private wealth creation?

[JUSTICE]

AFFIRMATIVE ACCESS

By a 5-3 vote, the Supreme Court ruled against California’s policy of separating inmates by race during their first 60 days in prison. A state corrections official told the *Los Angeles Times* that the move will be “catastrophic and extremely dangerous.” “The only way the system has maintained any sense of control has been through segregation policies.” But apparently multiculturalism trumps all practical considerations.

During oral arguments, Justice John Paul Stevens asked what he called a “stupid question”: if the state’s goal is to discourage racial violence, would it not be better to house prisoners with members of a different race? He was right—about the stupid part. Human Rights Watch reports, “white inmates are disproportionately targeted for abuse.” A warden testified, “You cannot house a Japanese inmate with a Chinese inmate.

They will kill each other.” In fact, the practice of separating inmates by race arose in 1994 when the Mexican Mafia ordered imprisoned Latino gang members to target Asians. One inmate of Chinese and Cambodian descent told the *Times* that integration is “like feeding us to the sharks.”

Liberals who write legal opinions can afford to view the world through an ideological lens. But those charged with maintaining order among a community of felons know that this is not a population amenable to lessons in diversity.

Several months ago, *TAC* received notice from the Texas Department of Corrections that an issue of our magazine ordered by an inmate had been confiscated because a certain phrase might incite racial rioting. Our offense? Referring to a wayward relative as the family’s “black ewe.” Of course the prison officials overreacted, but their skittishness shows just how close to the surface these tensions run—and suggests that political correctness may have taken the court somewhere cruel and unusual.

[NEOCONS]

CHALABI OF THE MONTH

Not so long ago Walid Jumblatt, leader of Lebanon’s Progressive Socialist Party, was saying things like “we are all happy when an American soldier is killed” and “The true axis of evil that rules the world today is an axis of oil and Jews.” A conspiracy nut as well as an anti-Semite, Jumblatt hinted darkly to *Al-Arabiyya* TV last year that the U.S. government was complicit in the 9/11 attacks.

But today Jumblatt is a trusted source for those neocons and others who want to believe Syria assassinated former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. Evidently he’s had a road-to-Damascus experience. Singing a new tune—“I was cynical about Iraq. But when I saw the Iraqi people voting three weeks ago, 8 million of them, it was the start of a new

Arab world.... The Berlin Wall has fallen”—Jumblatt has been cited approvingly, and credulously, by the *Washington Post*’s David Ignatius, *National Review*’s Jim Geraghty, and warbloggers Glenn Reynolds, Vodkapundit, and Arthur Chrenkoff, among others. According to Geraghty, “the White House is now circulating ... Jumblatt’s comment,” too.

If the day comes when Iraq-style democracy arrives in Lebanon, perhaps Jumblatt—who applauded the destruction of the *Columbia*, saying “My joy was great because one of those killed was an Israeli astronaut”—will stand ready to become the next Ahmad Chalabi.

[EDUCATION]

LIMITED GOVERNMENT LEFT BEHIND

On Jan. 17, announcing that he’s extending his education initiative to high school, President Bush told a group of students, “We’re making great progress because of the No Child Left Behind Act. I will vigorously defend the No Child Left Behind Act.” He should have waited a month.

The results of a yearlong study of the effectiveness of the Bush education reforms are in—and the news isn’t good. A bipartisan panel of state lawmakers concluded, “Under NCLB, the federal government’s role has become excessively intrusive...” Moreover, the policy “include[s] several methodological flaws” and is “overly prescriptive and rigid.”

The Department of Education shot back that the “report could be interpreted as wanting to reverse the progress we’ve made”—then reverted to the sort of boilerplate bureaucrats use when programs can’t be defended on their merits: “NCLB is bringing new hope and new opportunity.” But at what cost? National spending on education has ballooned 40 percent to \$24.35 billion since Bush took office, but that’s the least of it. The damage to federalist constraints is incalculable. ■

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A Republic, Not a Democracy

As Herr Schroeder was babbling on in Mainz, during his joint press conference with President Bush, about a need for carrots to coax Tehran off its nuclear program,

Bush interrupted the chancellor to issue yet another demand—that “the Iranian government listen to the hopes and aspirations of the Iranian people.”

“We believe,” said Bush, “that the voice of the people ought to be determining policy, because we believe in democracy...”

Who, one wonders, is feeding the president his talking points? Is he unaware that the Iranian people, even opponents of the regime, believe Iran has a right to nuclear power and should retain the capacity to build nuclear weapons?

While 70 percent of Iranians may have voted to dump the mullahs, just as Pakistanis were delirious with joy when they exploded their first nuclear device, we should expect Iranians to react the same way. What people have not celebrated their nation joining the exclusive nuclear club?

“We believe ... that the voice of the people ought to be determining policy,” said Bush, “because we believe in democracy.” Does Bush really believe this? How does he think the Arab peoples would vote on the following questions: (1) Should the United States get out of Iraq? (2) Is it fair to compare Israel’s treatment of Palestinians to Nazi treatment of the Jews? (3) Do Arab nations have the same right to an atom bomb as Ariel Sharon? (4) Is Osama bin Laden a terrorist or hero?

If Bush believes he and we are popular in the Islamic world, why has he not scheduled a grand tour of Rabat, Cairo, Beirut, Amman, Riyadh, and Islamabad to rally the masses to America’s side, rather than preaching democracy at

them from the White House? If one-man, one-vote democracy came suddenly to the Arab world, every pro-American ruler in the region would be at risk of being swept away.

Yet there is a larger issue here than misreading the Arab mind. Whence comes this democracy-worship, this belief by President Bush that “the voice of the people ought to be determining policy”?

Would Bush himself let a poll of Americans decide how long we keep troops in Iraq? Would he submit his immigration policy to popular vote?

“We often hear the claim that our nation is a democracy,” writes columnist Dr. Walter Williams. But, “That wasn’t the vision of the founders. They saw democracy as another form of tyranny. ... The founders intended, and laid out the ground rules for, our nation to be a republic. ... The word democracy appears nowhere in the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution.”

Indeed, the Constitution guarantees “to every State in this Union a republican form of government.” Asks Williams: “Does our pledge of allegiance to the flag say to ‘the democracy for which it stands,’ or does it say to ‘the republic for which it stands’? Or do we sing ‘The Battle Hymn of the Democracy’ or ‘The Battle Hymn of the Republic’?”

There is a critical difference between a republic and a democracy, Williams notes, citing our second president: “John Adams captured the essence of that difference when he said: ‘You have rights antecedent to all earthly governments; rights that cannot be repealed or restrained by human laws; rights derived

from the Great Legislator of the Universe.’ Nothing in our Constitution suggests that government is a grantor of rights. Instead, government is a protector of rights.”

The Founders deeply distrusted democracy. Williams cites Adams again: “Remember, democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts and murders itself. There was never a democracy yet that did not commit suicide.” Chief Justice John Marshall seconded Adams’s motion: “Between a balanced republic and a democracy, the difference is like that between order and chaos.”

“When the Constitution was framed,” wrote historian Charles Beard, “no respectable person called himself or herself a democrat.”

Democracy-worship suggests a child-like belief in the wisdom and goodness of “the people.” But the people supported the guillotine in the French Revolution and Napoleon. The people were wild with joy as the British, French, and German boys marched off in August 1914 to the Great War. The people supported Hitler and the Nuremberg Laws.

Our Founding Fathers no more trusted in the people always to do the right thing than they trusted in kings. In the republic they created, the House of Representatives, the people’s house, was severely restricted in its powers by a Bill of Rights and checked by a Senate whose members were to be chosen by the states, by a president with veto power, and by a Supreme Court.

“What kind of government do we have?” the lady asked Benjamin Franklin, as he emerged from the Constitutional Convention. Said Franklin, “A republic—if you can keep it.”

Let us restore that republic. As Jefferson said, “Hear no more of trust in men, but rather bind them down from mischief with the chains of the Constitution.” ■

[Bush's book club]

Sharansky's Double Standard

For the advocate of universal democracy, human rights don't begin at home.

By Michael C. Desch

FOR THOSE WHO became politically aware during the 1970s, no cause added greater moral urgency to the Cold War than the Soviet Union's refusal to allow Jews to emigrate to Israel. And apart from signs demanding "Free Soviet Jews" in front of almost every synagogue or temple in America, nothing symbolized the plight of captive Soviet Jewry better than the tribulations of Anatoli Shcharansky.

In 1973, after being denied permission to emigrate to Israel, he became one of the leading Jewish refuseniks lobbying for greater human rights in Brezhnev's Soviet Union. After four years of waging this campaign, constantly harried and harassed by the KGB, he was arrested in 1977 and tried and convicted of being an American spy in 1978. He served nine years in the gulag, much of it in solitary confinement.

During his incarceration as a prisoner of conscience, Shcharansky's stature in the West grew. As the citation for his Congressional Gold Medal noted, he "became a living symbol of Soviet human-rights abuses in the post-Helsinki era." Released in 1986 as part of a spy exchange with West Germany, he received a hero's welcome in the West where he was rechristened Natan Sharansky by Israel's ambassador to West Germany and whisked to Israel to make *aliyah*. The *New York Times* put it succinctly: he had become a "Jewish saint."

After his ascent to Israel in 1986, Sharansky was only intermittently in the limelight in the United States. That changed in November 2004 when Tom Bernstein, a former business partner and political supporter of George W. Bush, passed the president an advance copy of Sharansky's new book, *The Case for Democracy*. In it, Sharansky argues, "I am convinced that all peoples desire to be free. I am convinced that freedom anywhere will make the world safer everywhere. And I am convinced that democratic nations, led by the United States, have a critical role to play in expanding freedom around the globe."

This message resonated with Bush, and the book rocketed to bestseller status on the endorsement of a president not known as a bibliophile. After meeting with Sharansky for an hour in the Oval Office, Bush told the *New York Times*, "I felt like his book just confirmed what I believe. He writes a heck of a lot better than I could write, and he's certainly got more credibility than I have. After all he spent time in a Soviet prison and he has a much better perspective than I've got. I think that it's an important book and I think people ought to read it." He affirmed the same on CNN, adding, "[Sharansky] talks about freedom and what it means, and how freedom can change the globe. And I agree with him. I believed that before I met Natan Sharansky. This is a book

that, however, summarizes how I feel." *Newsweek* called it Bush's "manifesto."

One would have to go back decades, to Christopher Lasch's *Culture of Narcissism* and the Carter White House, to find an administration so swayed by an author. Bush's second inaugural speech closely tracked the themes—if not the actual words—of *The Case for Democracy*. Compare his admonition, "We do not accept the existence of permanent tyranny because we do not accept the possibility of permanent slavery" to Sharansky's assertion, "Just as the institution of slavery has been all but wiped off the face of the earth, so too can government tyranny become a thing of the past."

In her confirmation hearings, Condoleezza Rice cited what she called Sharansky's "town square test"—repeating that if a person cannot walk into the middle of a town square and express his or her views without fear of arrest, that person is living in a "fear society." For weeks Sharansky's work was sold-out in Washington area bookstores.

The one-time Soviet prisoner, now an Israeli cabinet minister, became the personal embodiment of the link that neo-conservative intellectuals had long asserted in print between the Cold War and "World War IV"—a long twilight struggle against totalitarianism morphing seamlessly into the War on Terror. Sharansky could claim authoritatively

that the battles against Soviet despotism and Islamic terrorists were essentially part of the same fight, the free against the unfree. As a result of his personal struggle, Sharansky embodied, to use a favorite catchword of the administration's ideologists, "moral clarity."

But in real political life, moral clarity between liberty and despotism is not so easy to come by—and perhaps nowhere is that clearer than in Sharansky's own path since he entered Israeli politics. For there his career has been marked not by moral clarity but rather by moral ambiguity and inconsistency in his advocacy of democracy and human rights, particularly in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Sharansky arrived in Israel five or six years before the wave of Soviet Jews who came in the 1990s in the wake of Mikhail Gorbachev's *glasnost* and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union. Initially, Sharansky used his public stature as a former Prisoner of Zion to lobby for better integration of these Russian Jews into Israeli society. But in 1995, he jumped directly into Israeli politics, forming a new party, Yisrael B'Aliyah, to represent these new immigrants. With

morphed from avatar of universal human rights into a pillar of Israel's nationalist camp.

Soon after Sharansky's arrival on Israel's political scene, international human rights advocates and members of the Israeli peace movement began to suspect that he adopted a double standard in dealing with the Palestinians. After a long and exasperating exchange with Sharansky in 1997, an Arab reporter for *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* threw up his hands and exclaimed, "What you are in effect saying is that everything that the Israeli Government does today is right, that the whole world is wrong to criticize Israel, and that there is no possibility of making any changes in Israel's policies?" Sharansky blithely responded, "I would not put it quite so strongly."

In the years since then, these suspicions have spread widely. As former America-Israel Public Affairs Committee official M.J. Rosenberg observed in a letter to the *Washington Post* in response to a review of Sharansky's new book, "The test of whether one is a human rights activist or one who simply uses the issue for political ends is that person's willingness to apply the human

fore, he has opposed territorial concessions in advance of political reform in the Palestinian territories. But his past behavior calls into question his commitment to democracy as the *sine qua non* for relations between Israel and other states. For example, he saw no problem with making peace with autocratic Jordan in the 1990s. As he told *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, "We achieved some excellent results, and here I must point out that our relations with Jordan are excellent. Our two states will become a model oasis of peace."

Sharansky has also become Israel's most ardent advocate for closer relations between the Jewish state and an increasingly autocratic Russia—though he recognizes "some unfortunate things are happening in Russia." During a 1998 visit to his former homeland, Sharansky told *Interfax* that the two countries "share numerous strategic interests, economic, political, sometimes even military." But even after the Jan. 9, 2005 Palestinian Authority elections brought Mahmoud Abbas to power democratically, Sharansky still demanded in the pages of the *Wall Street Journal* that the Palestinians do more to democratize their system.

Nor has Sharansky been a consistent advocate of democracy and the rule of law within Israel itself. As minister of the interior in 1999, he refused to extradite two Russian Jews living in Israel who were former NKVD officers charged with massacring dozens of civilians in Lithuania prior to World War II. In December 2003, Sharansky addressed a rally in Jerusalem where some other speakers advocated disenfranchising Israeli Arabs.

But the issue that raises the most questions about Sharansky's commitment to peace is his consistent unwillingness seriously to consider returning occupied territory to the Palestinians. Sharansky maintains that in principle

HIS CAREER HAS BEEN MARKED **NOT BY MORAL CLARITY** BUT RATHER BY MORAL **AMBIGUITY AND INCONSISTENCY** IN HIS ADVOCACY OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS, PARTICULARLY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE **ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**.

the votes of hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews, Sharansky won a seat in the Knesset and his political career took off. He served in ministerial positions under the Netanyahu (Industry and Tourism), Barak (Interior), and Sharon (Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs) governments. With the demise of Yisrael B'Aliyah, Sharansky formally joined Likud in 2003. Over the course of Sharansky's political career, he has steadily

rights measuring stick to his own people. It is pretty easy to limit your calls for human rights to nations other than your own. For Sharansky, concern for Palestinians is the test of whether or not his claim to the mantle of human rights activist is genuine. As this book demonstrates, he fails—big time."

Sharansky has consistently argued that Israel can only make peace with a democratic Palestinian Authority. There-

he supports an independent Palestinian state, but in practice he has thwarted steps in that direction at nearly every turn. For instance, the 1996 platform of his supposedly moderate Yisrael B'Aliyah Party explicitly "opposes the establishment of a Palestinian state." As minister of the interior, Sharansky played a key role behind the scenes in undercutting Barak at Camp David. Even the suggestion that the Labor prime minister intended to make concessions to Arafat on Jerusalem and refugees led Sharansky to threaten resignation. Later, he would tell Frontpage webzine that Barak's Camp David offer was "overgenerous," a view that few serious analysts of the period would endorse.

When the quartet of the United States, the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations proposed a roadmap to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and establish an independent Palestinian state, Sharansky grumbled to *Interfax*, "I reject this plan in its current form. The three drafts of the 'roadmap' I have read are a roll-back to the Oslo process, which was a complete failure. ... Our goal is to deprive [the Arafat] regime of its legitimacy and force."

After Ariel Sharon proposed a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and a small part of the West Bank in the spring of 2004, Sharansky joined with other Likud intransigents in opposing it: "We withdrew from 40% of the territory and ceased our rule over 98% of the population. In return, we received exploding buses. The world demanded more. We offered the Palestinians everything, the works, and in return, we received the cruelest terror. The world responded by treating us like lepers and war criminals. Why should the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip be any different?"

In a particularly cynical move, Sharansky and Sharon's other opponents sought to twist Israel's democratic

process to hobble even this very tentative step toward peace. As a recent *Ha'aretz* editorial characterizes this ploy: "The referendum campaign being waged by Sharon's ministers, his buddies in the Likud, the settlers and fanatics of every stripe, is a threat to the democratic-parliamentary structure of the state, no matter how you look at it." In a recent cabinet vote on Sharon's Gaza withdrawal plan, Sharansky cast one of five nays.

On the nettlesome issue of dividing the holy city of Jerusalem, Sharansky takes an uncompromising line. In the *New York Times* Sharansky warned, "if the Jewish people are not prepared to hold their ground in the city that for

The land was not really abandoned. Rather, the Palestinian owners could not assert their claim because their property was on the wrong side of Israel's security fence. Lower ranking Ministry of Justice officials objected to this decision, but it did not become a public issue until Israel's attorney general formally declared Sharansky's move illegal. Labor Member of Knesset Amram Mitzna simply labeled it "theft."

Sharansky also poses as the world's conscience on the rise of anti-Semitism around the world—particularly in the Palestinian territories. In January 2005, he released a study claiming he had "circumstantial evidence" that the Palestinians were conducting systematic Nazi

SHARANSKY ACCUSED LEFT-WING ISRAELIS OF BEING "COLLABORATORS" WITH THE NEW ANTI-SEMITISM AND CLAIMED THAT THEY ARE "SETTING THE JEWISH HOME ON FIRE."

2,000 years kept the dream of Jewish sovereignty alive, I shudder to think of where we are willing to draw the line." In the pages of *Ma'ariv*, Sharansky even rejected the possibility that Yassir Arafat might at least be buried in the city after his death. "The idea of setting aside a burial plot for Arafat in a building adjacent to the Temple Mount is another of Arafat's fantasies aiming to control the Temple Mount, but it will never materialize."

The issue that has done the most to convince many Israelis that Sharansky's commitment to democratic procedures is selective was his recent behavior as minister for Jerusalem. In June 2004, in a move *Ha'aretz* reported in an article aptly entitled "Like Thieves in the Night," Sharansky and another minister met secretly and declared large tracts of Arab land in Jerusalem to be abandoned and therefore subject to confiscation.

propaganda against the Jews through the textbooks used in Palestinian schools. But even before this report was released, the United States Consulate General in Jerusalem had commissioned its own study of Palestinian textbooks and found no incitement to hatred. As the *Jerusalem Post* reported in January 2004, Sharansky even accused left-wing Israelis of being "collaborators" with the new anti-Semitism and claimed that when they engage in criticism of the Israeli government's policies they are "setting the Jewish home on fire." So much for that town-square test whereby a society is deemed free if opponents can publicly criticize the government without fear of recrimination. If Sharansky had his way, few Palestinians—or Israelis for that matter—would feel confident criticizing Israel's policies for fear of being labeled anti-Semites.

So how did one of the moral paragons of the Cold War struggle against communism and one of today's most influential proponents of the spread of democracy also become one of the most unscrupulous and implacable opponents of a territorial compromise with the Palestinians? Three factors seem to be at work.

First, the corrupt nature of the Israeli political system encourages behavior that is inconsistent with how we hope democratic politics will operate. Indeed,

Sharansky in 1995 or 1996 for his charitable organization for Russian immigrants.

Sharansky was indignant when Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu was implicated in the Bar-Or corruption affair in Israel and promised to leave government if even 10 percent of the charges were true. But as *New York Times* correspondent Serge Schmemmann reported, Sharansky soon did an about-face, earning the nickname "Mr. Ten Percent" among some Israelis.

another Russian Jew, saw the potential for a political party based on the growing Russian Jewish community and better understood that this community was very hawkish, particularly on the issues of Islam (which for Russians was clearly identified with the Chechen War) and the Arabs. Subsequently, Sharansky and Lieberman formed the National Unity Block, which came to represent the most nationalistic edge of the Israeli political spectrum. Like their former countrymen back in the old motherland, Russian Jews in Israel are, in the words of Eduard Kuznetsov, editor of the Israeli Russian-language paper *Vesti*, "the descendants of an imperial attitude. Land is sacred. And though only 1 percent of them live in the occupied territories, they have an instinctive hatred of Arabs and see no reason to make any concessions." As an illustration of how extreme some in the Russian Jewish community have become, *Ha'aretz* recently noted that one Russian Jewish journalist called for the castration of Arabs in order to keep their population in check. Sharansky no doubt became more hawkish as he realized that this was the political center of gravity among most Russian Jews.

Belying his humanitarian image in the West, Sharansky routinely inflates the security threats that Israel faces and then argues that this dire peril justifies extreme measures in response. Listening to Sharansky, one would never know that Israel has the most powerful army in the Middle East and possesses a very large and sophisticated nuclear arsenal. In Sharansky's view "Israel is the only country that is officially threatened to be destroyed by a whole range of countries possessing a far greater military capacity. This includes Iran, which is developing lethal weapons, including nuclear weapons In these conditions we cannot limit our defense capabilities." Not only does Israel need to

HOW DID ONE OF TODAY'S **MOST INFLUENTIAL PROPONENTS** OF THE SPREAD OF DEMOCRACY ALSO BECOME ONE OF THE **MOST UNSCRUPULOUS AND IMPLACABLE OPPONENTS** OF A TERRITORIAL COMPROMISE WITH THE **PALESTINIANS**?

when Sharansky threw his hat into the ring in the mid-1990s, some admirers expressed concern. In a *Wall Street Journal* piece in October 1995, one worried, "What happens when a man of unimpeachable integrity walks into the imperfect world of politics? We may soon have our answer in Israel."

Even before he became formally active in Israeli politics, Sharansky was linked with some shady characters. The *Scotsman* tied Sharansky's Yisrael B'Aliyah to Russian mafia figure Grigory Lerner. According to the *Jerusalem Post*, Israel's Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani also confirmed that as minister for trade and industry, Sharansky organized a 1996 meeting between another Russian Jew, Grigory Luchansky, and Likud Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The London *Times* called Luchansky "the most dangerous non-convicted person in the world" and the British government barred him from the country. The Israeli government also refused to renew his passport because of his suspected ties to Russian organized crime. Luchansky himself admitted to *Globes* that he gave money directly to

In July 2000, the Israeli paper *Ma'ariv* revealed that the U.S. Treasury Department had provided documents to the Israeli government showing that over \$300,000 had been transferred by an American nonprofit organization to an Israeli filmmaker to make a campaign film for Sharansky in violation of Israeli election laws. Sharansky refused to cooperate with that investigation. This reinforced the view of growing numbers of Israelis that Sharansky valued political power more than principle. Israeli human rights activist Hirsh Goodman told the *New York Times* that Sharansky is "wooing a constituency, and turning his back on the liberal human rights personality that he was. I think that he's an obstructionist, and intellectually and politically dishonest, but, hey, that's just playing the brutal rules of the political game in this country."

Second, the nature of Sharansky's political constituency in Israel drove him to the nationalist extreme. His original party started out narrowly focused on advancing the ethnic interests of Russian Jews and was fairly moderate on most other issues. But Avigdor Lieberman,

pursue continued military supremacy, but it should also employ all other means at its disposal to destroy its enemies. As Sharansky told Russia's *Interfax* in 1998, "over 5 million Israelis live in peace" thanks to targeted assassinations. Two years later, in the course of another visit to an increasingly authoritarian Russia engaged in a brutal campaign against Chechen separatists, Itar-Tass reported that Sharansky compared Russia's struggle in Chechnya with Israel's struggle against the Palestinians. Both were, in his view, part of the larger struggle against Islamic fundamentalism. In 2002, during yet another visit to his former homeland, Sharansky was quoted in *Izvestiya* as saying that Israel "must destroy terror. That will be our contribution to the struggle of the entire free world." When Sharansky addresses the Israel-Palestine conflict in English, he advocates promoting democracy in the Arab world to achieve peace. But when he speaks about it in Russian and Hebrew, he uses the language of brute force.

Finally, Sharansky told an American interviewer that he saw no incompatibility between his ardent Zionism and his commitment to the struggle for universal human rights and democracy. But when push comes to shove, Zionism trumps all else for him. Sharansky entertains few doubts about the Jews' exclusive claim to the biblical land of Israel. In a recent *Ha'aretz* interview, he maintained the "Jews came here 3,000 years ago and this is the cradle of Jewish civilization. Jews are the only people in history who kept their loyalty to their identity and their land throughout the 2,000 years of exile, and no doubt that they have the right to have their place among nations—not only historically but also geographically. As to the Palestinians, who are the descendants of those Arabs who migrated in the last 200 years, they have the right, if they want, to have their own state... but not at the expense of the

state of Israel." Faced with the choice of trading land for peace, Sharansky advocates keeping all the land and continuing the fight with the Arabs. In a 2003 *Jerusalem Post* opinion piece entitled "Temple Mount Is More Important Than Peace," Sharansky baldly stated, "It was not for the sake of peace that the State of Israel was established, and it was not because of peace that millions of Jews gathered here. Nor was it peace for which the Jewish people prayed for thousands of years. The Jewish people prayed for Jerusalem." Rhetorically, Sharansky can square his commitment with Zionism and the universal promotion of democracy and human rights. In practice, if he is forced to choose, Zionism wins every time.

Of course, none of this is to suggest that Sharansky does not deserve our

respect for his past suffering in the gulag. Nor does it deny that Sharansky's campaigns to promote democracy and combat anti-Semitism have been beneficial for many people around the world. But his views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while certainly clear, hardly represent the sort of moral clarity that sets democracy and self-determination as supreme political values. This divergence—between Sharansky's rhetoric and real-world political behavior—suggests that he is not the reliable beacon for American foreign policy that the Bush administration so desperately seeks. ■

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[gullible's travels]

Mr. Bush Goes to Europe

... and comes home empty-handed.

By Stuart Reid

LONDON—George W. Bush got one thing right in Europe last month. "Iran isn't Iraq," he said in Mainz. But Europe isn't the United States, and the president's charm offensive left most Europeans drumming their fingers or putting out the cat. Bush gave it all he had but received nothing in return—other than an undertaking by NATO leaders to train some Iraqi cops, and that had never been in doubt anyway.

Let's rewind the tape. Before a joint session of Congress on Sept. 20, 2001 the commander in chief declared, "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists." Less than a month later, on Nov. 6, he told a press conference in Warsaw, "Over time it's going to be important for nations to know they will be held accountable for inactivity. You're either with us or

against us in the fight against terror.” Then the message was “back us or else”; today it’s “back us, pretty please.” Two years after launching shock and awe, the United States has shown itself to be a mendicant nation, dependent on the kindness of strangers and, more tragically, of old friends. To plant the flag of freedom in every nation on earth, America needs Europe.

Such was Bush’s desire to please, and to appear reasonable, that in the keynote speech of his European tour he sounded like the “West Wing’s” fictitious President Bartlett. “[O]ur strong friendship is essential to peace and prosperity across the globe—and no temporary debate, no passing disagreement of governments, no power on earth will ever divide us,” declared President Bartlett-Bush. We hid our heads in our hands or stared earnestly at our shoes. The sub-Churchillian rhetoric continued without mercy: “when Europe and America

a silly idea. No one who opposed the war accepts that the Iraqi elections vindicate the decision to go to war. If you believed in March 2003 that Iraq posed no threat to the United States or to Western Europe or even to her neighbors and that she had absolutely nothing to do with 9/11, the sight of happy, smiling voters now will not cause you to alter that view. Good comes from evil, but that does not justify the evil. Besides, who won the Iraqi elections? It’s too early to say with any certainty, but if you believe what you read in the *New York Sun*, the answer is Iran.

One thing we can say, however, is that the axis of evil remains in place, and it is getting scrappier by the day. Europeans will continue with their cynical plan to sell arms to China, but they will not support America in its crusade to make the world safe for democracy. That trick has been tried before, and it ended in tyranny. Nor will the Euro-

inevitably, foaming anti-Americans. The United States itself was represented by a bearded man from Manhattan who, unlike the rest of the crowd, didn’t want Mr. Bush to go home. A young woman dribble-vomited in a side street. The Turkish People’s Revolutionary front carried a banner proclaiming “War Until Liberation.” That sounded familiar. What else is “War Until Liberation” but global democratic revolution writ large? I suggested to an amiable young Turkish bandit that there was no difference between his approach and George W. Bush’s. “You are both fighting for liberty,” I said. “There is a difference,” he said. “Bush started his war. We are fighting against oppression.” But so is Bush ... and so on and so on. You quickly get into a loop with these guys.

Thank God for normal folk. Just after breakfast on the second day of Bush’s visit to Brussels, Jacques Chirac emerged from the Hotel Amigo and gracefully slipped into the back seat of a black Mercedes. He waved to half a dozen Frenchies, who clapped him. So did I. Later, in a nearby *chocolatier*, I discussed the French president’s sleeping habits with the girl behind the counter. A customer said: “But where did the terrorists stay? At the Motel Six?” “No,” said the girl. “At the youth ‘ostel!’” This was not a very good joke, but it fair knocked the girl off her feet, and I laughed too. In Brussels there was skepticism aplenty about the Bush visit, but—away from the demonstrators—no nastiness that I could detect. The Belgians have better things to do than to shout abuse at Uncle Sam. They have “Assault on Precinct 13” to watch, Tex-Mex food to scoff, and beer to drink in lethal quantities.

So what’s going on here? This year’s big idea is that the 21st century belongs to Europe. To the neocons, and to their many friends and allies in the United

IN HIS OWN EYES, NO DOUBT BUSH MADE THE EUROPEANS AN OFFER THEY COULD NOT REFUSE—BUT THEY DID ANYWAY.

stand together, no problem can stand against us” ... “the highest ideals of humanity” ... “the great and proud nation of Egypt.” Then came the punchline: “America supports a strong Europe because we need a strong partner in the hard work of advancing freedom in the world.” In other words, please back us (and Tonga) in the War on Terror; if you do we’ll back a strong, federalist Europe. In his own eyes, no doubt Bush had made the Europeans an offer they could not refuse—but they did anyway.

The idea behind the conciliatory swing through Europe, remember, was that France and Germany had been chastened by the success of the Iraqi elections, and they would now fall in behind Uncle Sam. But that was always

peans join the U.S. in threatening Iran with UN sanctions. Instead, with Washington’s approval, France, Germany, and Great Britain will continue on their diplomatic route.

In light of all this, the posturing of the antiwar street people becomes increasingly irrelevant and distasteful. The international Left—which is about all that remains of the protest community—is no more attractive or persuasive than the international Right. All the usual suspects turned out in Brussels to greet Bush: the smug, the sensibly fed, the well dressed, the expensively educated, the selectively compassionate, the congenitally bossy, the compulsively noisy. There were also, to be fair, the principled and the brave, as well as,

Kingdom, this is not so much an idea as a specter. These people pretend to scorn Europe—that union of political correctness gone mad and wall-to-wall anti-Semitism—but in fact they fear her. The strong Europe of Bush's Brussels speech challenges the hegemonic power of the U.S. and with it the vicarious power of the lower reaches of the British establishment. Already the challenge is being

untrue that Europe is indifferent to liberty, conservatives will always place liberty behind stability. Without stability there can be no justice, and therefore no true liberty. "Give me stability or give me death" is not a phrase that will set the world on fire, however.

Whence this conservatism? A residual Christianity—more specifically, Catholicism and its strong social tradition—

THE CHURCH SUPPORTS THE **EUROPEAN DREAM**. SHE DOES NOT, HOWEVER, SUPPORT THE **AMERICAN DREAM** AND HAS CONSISTENTLY PREACHED AGAINST WHAT BUSH CALLS FREEDOM.

felt. In terms of GDP, health care, and productivity, Europe not only matches the United States but in some cases far surpasses her. To be sure, Europe has no military clout, but, as we have seen in the case of America, military clout does not win wars or friends. Besides, if the constitution agreed to last June is ratified by the member states, Europe will have a common foreign and security policy—making the emergence a fortress Europe more likely—and it will be goodbye NATO and GI Joe and hello multipolarity and snotty, old European diplomacy.

But the conflict goes deeper than mere geopolitical *amour-propre* (and its attendant greed, fear, and resentment). In the *Weekly Standard* Gerard Baker, the British neocon symp, put it this way: "The Bush administration remains committed to revolutionary change throughout the world, and ... believes America's security is inextricably tied up with the advance of liberty well beyond its borders. Europeans, meanwhile, are ever more staunch in their defense of the status quo, however unfree that may leave people. Stability, not liberty, is their aim." What Baker detects—and dislikes—in Europe is an essentially conservative view of the world. While it is

governs much European thinking. In most practical senses, of course, it is absurd to call Europeans Christian. The EU is a thoroughly secular construct. Europeans, furthermore, are every bit as intolerant as American secularists when confronted with Christian intransigence. All the same, most of the nations of Europe are nominally Catholic, and, unlike the United States, those that are not at least have a Catholic past. The EU itself was created by Catholics, with an explicitly Catholic social agenda.

The Church supports the European Dream. She does not, however, support the American Dream and has consistently preached against what Bush calls freedom—essentially, liberal capitalism and radical individualism. Pius XI held that liberal capitalism and communism were united in their "satanic optimism." The present pontiff, John Paul II, is keenly aware of the perils of freedom. In his encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* he wrote, "Certain currents of modern thought have ... exalted freedom to such an extent that it becomes an absolute. ... The individual conscience is accorded the status of supreme tribunal of moral judgment that hands down ... infallible decisions about good and evil. ... Claims

of truth disappear, yielding their place to a criterion of sincerity, authenticity, and being at peace with oneself." In September 1993 John Paul traveled to Riga, where he troubled Wall Street by speaking of "Marxism's kernel of truth" and denouncing "the international imperialism of money."

There is an unbridgeable gap between Rome (and Brussels) and Washington, and it widened considerably when the United States attacked Iraq. In his recently published *All the Pope's Men*, the Vatican-watcher John Allen observes that many conservative Catholic Americans believe that the rift is a temporary disruption of a natural alliance. "In fact," writes Allen, "... a careful reading of recent history suggests another hypothesis—that Cold War politics made temporary bedfellows out of the Vatican and the United States, and what is reemerging now is the caution and reluctance that have always characterized Vatican attitudes about America.... Key Vatican officials, especially Europeans from traditional Catholic cultures, have long worried about aspects of American society—its exaggerated individualism, its hyper-consumer spirit, its relegation of religion to the private sphere, its Calvinist ethos. A fortiori, they worry about a world in which America is in an unfettered position to impose this set of cultural values on everyone else."

Politically and socially, Europe and America are divided by religion. Americans are much more devout than Europeans, of course, but also much more optimistic. In the darkest recesses of the secular European heart there is a sense that life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—however agreeable—are just passing fads, and as likely as *liberté, égalité, and fraternité* to end in misery. ■

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[road to damascus]

Syria in the Sights?

The assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri may become the flashpoint for the Bush administration's next war.

By Eric S. Margolis

AN OLD MIDEAST JOKE: God creates Lebanon, an exquisite country of forested mountains, golden beaches, and fertile lands. "Why so favor the Lebanese and give them only wonderful things?" asks an envious desert Arab. "Don't be jealous," God replies, "wait till you see their neighbors."

Just about everyone has been accusing Lebanon's neighbor and big brother, Syria, of assassinating former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. The 660-pound bomb that tore Hariri's armored limousine to shreds in downtown Beirut rocked Lebanon's political landscape and produced a firestorm of protest from Lebanese weary of Syria's long, heavy-handed occupation of their small nation. The United States and France joined the angry chorus calling for Syrian withdrawal.

A dozen Lebanese politicians have been killed in unsolved bombings over the past two decades. The most recent was Maronite warlord Elie Hobeika, blown apart by a car bomb just before going public with what he claimed was proof that Israel's then Defense Minister Ariel Sharon had directly ordered the massacre in 1982 of 2,000 Palestinian civilians at Shatila and Sabra camps. Still, even by Lebanon's exacting standards, Hariri's murder was a spectacular crime.

With pointed irony, the huge bomb that destroyed Hariri's convoy also badly damaged the renowned St. George

Hotel, the symbol of Beirut's European-oriented culture, good times, and lavish, un-Islamic living. Hariri played a paramount role in rebuilding the St. George and downtown Beirut after they were destroyed during Lebanon's ferocious 15-year civil war. This writer filed many a column from the St. George's bar, the favored watering hole of spies, journalists, intriguers, gunrunners, hashish lords, and shady businessmen.

Hariri was the prototypical Levantine entrepreneur—larger than life, cunning, expansive, generous, ruthless. He had connections everywhere. As prime minister and later in the opposition, Hariri dealt comfortably with Lebanon's Syrian overlords, enjoying important political and business connections to Damascus's ruling elite.

THE OUTRAGE **PLAYED STRAIGHT INTO THE HANDS OF THOSE FORCES WHO DESIRE TO SEE SYRIA'S HOLD OVER LEBANON BROKEN.**

Syrian troops had originally been invited into Lebanon by Maronite Christians and the Arab League to end the country's brutal civil war. They stayed on to dominate Lebanon's politics and to profit from its commerce, including golden hashish of the Bekka Valley. Half have returned home in recent years. While Hariri was said privately to favor the withdrawal of Syria's 14,000 "peace-

keeping" troops, he remained publicly silent. Syria had absolutely no reason to kill this old friend and ally.

Hariri's murder could not have come at a worse time for Damascus, as Syria faces intensifying diplomatic, economic, and military pressure from the Bush administration. In fact, the assassination was a disaster for Syria, whose grip on Lebanon has been steadily eroding. The outrage played straight into the hands of those forces—Lebanon's Maronite Christians, Druzes, Israel, France, and the U.S.—who desire to see Syria's hold over Lebanon broken.

Upon hearing the news about Hariri, Condoleezza Rice all but accused Damascus of his murder, recalled the U.S. ambassador to Syria, and came close to threatening war. President Bush

subsequently repeated these threats, though there was no proof of Syria's role in the murder. Nevertheless, Washington appears set on overthrowing the Assad regime in Damascus.

While a rogue unit of one of Syria's many intelligence agencies might have been involved, Hariri's murder could also have been the work of a deep underground Lebanese or Syrian Islamist

group; Lebanon's Syrian-hating Maronite Christians; or their longtime ally, Israel's Mossad, all of whom have sought to destabilize Syria and evict it from Lebanon; or even business rivals. Al-Qaeda was quick to deny involvement.

The mass demonstrations in Beirut provoked the resignation of Lebanon's pro-Syrian government, likely paving the way for new national elections that will bring in a regime hostile to Damascus and under the influence of the U.S. and France. Syria, clearly running scared, announced its troops would be withdrawn "soon" and scrambled to placate Washington—but to little effect.

For the Bush administration, *l'affaire* Hariri proved an ideal excuse for training its big guns on Damascus. Facing a military impasse and political uncertainties in Iraq, the administration's resurgent neocon hawks would like to vent their frustrations on Syria and Iran, both regarded as nests of Islamic terrorism and covert supporters of Iraqi resistance forces. Similar reasoning led Washington to attack Laos and Cambodia during the Indochina War.

Syria is right to worry. Bush appears at times to have been possessed by some sort of Manchurian Candidate syndrome. During a tour of Israel guided by Ariel Sharon, Bush's mind, hitherto untainted by knowledge of Mideast affairs, was apparently infused with the passion of Zionism. A deeply worried Gen. Brent Scowcroft, former national security adviser to Bush senior, warned recently that Sharon had "mesmerized" the younger Bush.

Soon after taking office, Bush declared Israel's enemies America's enemies. Palestinian resistance groups, notably Hamas and Islamic Jihad, were branded terrorist organizations, though their sole objective was to resist Israeli occupation, not menace America. Hezbollah, the Lebanese militant organization that drove Israel's occupation troops from

Lebanon, has also been officially designated as a terrorist group and is now squarely in Bush/Sharon's gun sights.

Israel is determined to get revenge on Hezbollah and to prevent it from supporting the Palestinians. Israel and Syria have been locked in a 25-year struggle to dominate Jordan and Lebanon. Sharon's 1982 invasion of Lebanon was designed to turn it into an Israeli protectorate, as Jordan had become. Syria sent in its troops and agents, and together with Hezbollah's guerrillas, they foiled Sharon's plans through a remarkably dirty war marked by bombings, kidnappings, and ambushes. A joint Israeli-U.S. offensive to crush Hezbollah would open Lebanon to renewed Israeli efforts to turn it into a protectorate.

ripe for regime change. While Israeli hawks were dead wrong about the war their American allies engineered in Iraq, they might be right about Syria.

Militant Islamic groups have long agitated for the overthrow of Syria's secular regime and its replacement by an Islamic government. Like Saddam's Iraq, a religious minority holds power over a restive, embittered majority by force of arms and political terror.

The regime President Bashar al-Assad inherited from his ruthless father, Gen. Hafiz Assad, is dominated by the Alawi, a secretive religious sect from the northern coast that comprises about 10 percent of Syria's population. Considered heretics by Sunni Muslims, the impoverished Alawi filled the armed forces in

A DEEPLY WORRIED **GEN. BRENT SCOWCROFT** WARNED RECENTLY THAT **SHARON HAD "MESMERIZED" THE YOUNGER BUSH.**

Lebanon, like Kuwait, is the creation of European colonialism. France detached it from historical Syria in the 1920s and made it an enclave for Maronite Christians who like to style themselves "Phoenicians." Syria never fully accepted Lebanon's independence and still considers it a part of Syria, but Washington demands Damascus "cease interfering in the affairs of Lebanon" without the slightest blush about its own military presence in Iraq.

Recently, the U.S. and France, showing rare co-operation, engineered a UN Security Council vote ordering Syria out of Lebanon. Syria's continued occupation violates the original 1989 Taif Agreement under which its troops ended the civil war. Syria has long refused to pull its troops out of Lebanon until Israel withdraws from the Golan Heights and the West Bank.

Meanwhile, Israel continues to prompt the White House that Syria is

the 1960s as a means of employment. General Assad came to power in a coup and held on for three decades thanks to Alawi control of the military and Syria's much-feared overlapping security services. Syria's Sunni majority, including the clandestine Muslim Brotherhood, one of the Arab World's oldest nationalist organizations, has opposed and periodically revolted against Alawi rule.

I was in the city of Hama during a ferocious uprising in which General Assad's troops killed an estimated 10,000 Sunni rebels and civilians. Hafiz Assad's heir, Bashar, has tried to liberalize, reform, and modernize Syria. Some progress has been made. There is a subtle but distinct political and social thaw going on, but the Ba'ath Party's old guard inherited from his father has thwarted Bashar's plans to open up Syria, ditch state socialism, end political repression, and link Syria to Europe. They fear, like the Communist Party dinosaurs who tried

to overthrow reformer Gorbachev, that any relaxation of control will produce a popular explosion.

Bashar Assad has repeatedly sought better relations with Washington and has helped in its war against Islamic militancy. But the Bush administration, like its Israeli partners, has rejected Syria's efforts.

Isolated, almost friendless, save for ally Iran, which is also under U.S. siege, Syria faces hostile Israel to the west and U.S. troops in Iraq on its eastern flank. Washington is hoping its campaign against Damascus will spark a military coup against the Assad regime that will bring in a U.S.-friendly junta—precisely the same thing the neocons hoped would happen in pre-invasion Iraq.

The overthrow or collapse of Syria's unloved regime, however, could itself bring chaos or civil war to the Levant, an extremely dangerous situation that Washington's Jacobin architects of a "new, democratic" Mideast have not yet taken into account. ■

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Anatomy of a Red State Rebellion

Why Karl Rove should visit Montana

By Jim Pittaway

IN MANY WAYS Montana represents the very model of a modern Red State. When the New Deal rescued its devastated economy from the horrors of the Great Depression and ended the bloody labor wars with the triumph of the labor movement, this state became a bastion of reliable Democratic politics. From the thirties through the mid-eighties, Montana provided the Democrats with a congressional delegation and a statehouse. The Republican Party was not dead—Montana's contrarians would occasionally elect a Republican congressman or one-term wonder Republican governor—but Democratic dominance of Montana politics was a given until the national party embraced the radical environmental agenda and declared no-quarter war on the livelihoods of families in this region.

By the nineties, Montana was red enough to be carried by Bob Dole. The enormously popular governor, Marc Racicot, stood astride the political landscape like a colossus, comfortably controlling both legislative houses, and the 2000 election handed George W. Bush a healthy victory here.

But something happened on the way to 2004. Sure, Bush carried the state, though it is hard to imagine a place where Kerry's substance and style clashed more dramatically with local culture and norms. It is equally hard to imagine a candidate more in tune with those norms than George W. Bush. Yet

no serious observer of Montana politics would deny that just about any other Democrat—with the possible exception of Howard Dean—would have carried this state, and a Bob Kerrey would, all things being equal, have won this state comfortably and would likely have carried Colorado, Nevada, and maybe Nebraska as well. The Red State vs. Blue State paradigm everyone is so fascinated with would look very different indeed.

But that is speculation. The reality that makes such speculation plausible is that beneath the surface of Bush's Red State lock, the Democrats made some startling gains in the intermountain West that Republican triumphalists would do well to ponder. Nowhere were these gains more dramatic than here in Montana, where the supposedly moribund Democrats took over the governor's mansion, both houses of the legislature, swept all significant statewide offices, and put moderate rather than conservative justices on the nominally nonpartisan state Supreme Court. Except for the ticket splitting that held the state for Bush—on a scale so widespread and unprecedented as to raise eyebrows even among Bush supporters—the Republican debacle could not have been more complete. Whether this is an anomaly and a product of the appalling ineptitude of Racicot's Republican successor or a disturbing trend with regional implications remains to be seen. But if I were a Republican strategist I

would want to know something about what went on out in this supposedly rock-solid piece of George Bush's America.

In its simplest terms, the Republican bloodbath in Montana involves a rejection of the politics of overheated ideology as practiced by a Republican majority that humiliated anyone who might question the sacred ideological principles of the Gingrich revolution. Once Racicot was not there to inject his charismatic eloquence into the debate, statehouse politics degenerated into vitriol and character assassination that traditionally laid-back westerners found increasingly distasteful. Naturally, they blamed those who held the whip hand. Republicans need to be mindful that a confrontational, take-no-prisoners, my-way-or-the-highway style of politics is antithetical to rural western styles of interaction, where the guy you just humiliated is likely to be somebody's blood kin or in-law.

Similarly, the gay-marriage issue left a very unpleasant taste in many mouths. While the electorate properly and handily approved a measure proscribing gay marriage, at the same time it moved both the legislature and the State Supreme Court dramatically leftward and tossed out the most strident gay-bashers at all levels of government. Libertarian-oriented westerners are uncomfortable with religion and politics, and Republicans would be wise not to push this any further and to be very careful about whom they might want to anathematize next. The electorate said "no" to the absurd excesses of the gay-rights movement but saw to it that lawmakers and courts do not start pushing these people around—and didn't trust the ideological wing of the Republican Party to resist doing that.

As far as the war is concerned, it's as unpopular here as anywhere else. But here in the intermountain West, more

than many other place, the Swift Boat message that Kerry could not be trusted—apparently confirmed by his waffling—had real traction. Republicans would be making a major mistake if they misconstrued Kerry's weakness or the clear unease of this electorate in this era of fear and crisis as an endorsement of the war policy or the Jacobin mission of America as articulated by this administration. The deep-seated traditions of live and let live and stay out of your neighbor's business that made this region a bastion of isolationism through much of the 20th century are not that far below the surface. And in the absence of follow-on attacks on American soil, the bloody shirt of Sept. 11 is beginning to fade as libertarian concerns for imperiled and abrogated rights ascend. A major element of the Democrats' Montana sweep was their careful attempt to cast themselves as a buffer between the people here and this administration's evident lack of regard for the Bill of Rights. Too many Republican legislators went in for the flag-waving, cheerleading, lock-step

practical men and women knew could only beget disaster. In the aftermath of the Democratic war on our economy, the only remaining resource that Montana could actually use and sell was electric power. Our capacity to generate surpluses of electricity provided the only well-paying, secure industrial jobs left in this state and guaranteed "first cut" low-cost power to Montana residents and businesses. In addition, the venerable Montana Power Company, with its vast resources and AAA credit and investment rating, provided an anchor for all sorts of power-related smaller businesses and a secure haven for pension funds and IRAs.

In the heady days following the Gingrich revolution, Montana Republicans, already in control of both houses and the governorship, started looking sideways at Montana Power. The deconstruction of this classic semi-private, semi-public utility seemed an irresistible mandate of the Contract with America. Spewing nonsense about how we would all be able to dam our backyard creeks and sell power to California, the Repub-

THE DEEP-SEATED TRADITIONS OF LIVE AND LET LIVE AND STAY OUT OF YOUR NEIGHBOR'S BUSINESS THAT MADE THIS REGION A BASTION OF ISOLATIONISM THROUGH MUCH OF THE 20TH CENTURY ARE NOT THAT FAR BELOW THE SURFACE.

endorsement of an administration whose policies, tendencies, and character are matters of widespread skepticism, even among people who voted for them.

All these things contributed to the stunning Democrat victories in this supposedly solid Red State. But the name of the iceberg that sank Montana's Republican Titanic was "privatization" and the bloody-minded application of an ideological principle in a way that all

licans pushed through deregulation over the objections of just about everyone who actually knew anything about how the power business was organized and operated. To wit, by removing any public controls, the legislature placed absolute ownership and control of Montana's enormous network of dams, generators, and transmission lines squarely in the hands of a dozen or so members of the board of directors of the Montana Power Company.

These rubes were immediately set upon by Wall Street attorneys and investment bankers who knew exactly what this was about—Montana Power was a Wall Street mainstay—and for a paltry few hundred million they bought off the board and brokered the sale of billions of dollars worth of Montana's assets to the highest bidder. To add insult to injury, they talked the directors into restructuring MPC as a dot com called "Touch America," which immediately collapsed in the dot-com bloodbath, wiping out all of MPC's employees and leaving stockholders, including pension funds, with absolutely nothing.

IT'S HARD EVEN TO CALL **MONTANA A RED STATE** ANYMORE WHEN THE **ONLY REPUBLICAN HOLDING STATEWIDE OFFICE** IS A U.S. SENATOR RE-ELECTED IN 2000. THERE'S **VERY LITTLE PATIENCE** SHOULD THE **WAR GO ON MUCH LONGER**.

Between 2000 and 2004, the bill for this came due—and it is enormous. Montanans now buy our power from some company in Pennsylvania. In two and a half years, my prorated power bill has gone from \$49 a month to \$189—with no ceiling in sight. All light industry—aluminum processing, mom-and-pop lumber mills, etc.—that depended on low-cost power has been wiped out. Deregulation of Montana's utilities has been a disaster of untold proportions, and elsewhere in the region similar forays have been put on the books but not yet fully implemented.

And there are other icebergs that threaten to sink the Republican Party in the Red States of the Rockies. One would obviously be the immigration amnesty endorsed by this administration and the failure of Republican statehouses to deal constructively with the social and economic consequences of illegal immigration. Excoriating it in principle while doing absolutely nothing

is wearing very thin in these Red States. At least the Democrats will see that these unfortunates are cared for and somewhat socialized.

At the same time, the Republican Party's dogmatic commitment to free trade hurts our agriculture and livestock businesses—a situation that could worsen significantly if subsidies that offset unfair "fair trade" practices are cut as planned.

But the real threat to Republican ascendancy in the Red States of the intermountain West lies in the empty promises of economic revival. These states turned Republican because we

believed that once in power the GOP would take on the pantheistic fundamentalism of environmental extremists who have destroyed our once considerable prosperity. We are tired of exporting our kids to California, New York, and Florida because a viable economic start is forbidden them here, and we had hopes that a revival of Republican conservatism in the spirit of Teddy Roosevelt would break the stranglehold of environmentalism and restore sanity to the conversation about resource use, management, and preservation. But there has been no leadership provided, only more politics of confrontation that has thrown everything into courts to be wrangled about endlessly.

Threatening to drill the Rocky Mountain Front so that the gas, oil, and profits can all be sent straight to Houston is as transparent as it is futile. It avails us nothing but harassment by well-meaning students raising funds for cynics who will litigate this into eternity.

Republicans haven't been willing or able to change or modify any of the applicable environmental laws, so all these grand executive orders about opening mines and timber production are nothing but a circus. The problem is, we're not getting any bread to go with it, and this act, like the immigration-reform act and the assorted barbarians-at-the-gate act, is getting stale.

Beneath the veneer of genius Karl Rove's brilliant Red State triumph of '04, the cracks are evident. It's hard even to call Montana a Red State anymore when the only Republican holding statewide office is a U.S. senator re-elected in 2000. There's no enthusiasm for the war and very little patience should it go on much longer. Dissatisfaction with No Child Left Behind is sowing frustration and acrimony in the school system—like "privatization," its downside is on the back end—and stripping agriculture subsidies to help pay for empowerment of pro-Iranian Shi'ites in Iraq is losing its appeal even before the cuts are felt. We are not the Bible Belt, and the extent to which we are perceived in those terms makes us uneasy. If they had any sense at all, the Democrats could easily pick off half a dozen intermountain West states in the next cycle, but it appears more likely that the Republicans will lose them instead by assuming that we're all immutably Red States and taking us for granted. ■

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Breeding Terror

The intelligence community analyzes a counterproductive war.

By James Bamford

"MARCO CONTACTED ME already. It's going to be difficult." On his small, hand-held computer, the arms dealer was being deliberately cryptic in his message to a business associate. Marco, his buyer, was possibly a terrorist interested in acquiring nuclear technology.

"Too many eyes on me," he warned. "But the Yanks are doing us a favor. Their military threats got my client's attention. He can't wait now for things to happen. The more talk of military action, the better, I say. And I have other buyers who are interested. Let's say more shady types.... [T]hey really got the superpower on the run. Even when it isn't WMD, they think it is."

Decrypted, the message reads: America's paranoia over terrorism is driving an increasingly belligerent foreign policy around the world that, in the end, is creating ever more terrorists. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy in which the only winners are the terrorists and the arms dealers.

The troubling computer message was not the product of an intercept by the National Security Agency or a wiretap by the FBI. Instead, it was invented by the CIA as an example of what might happen over the next decade and a half if internal fear and external force continue to dominate American policies at home and abroad.

The scenario, labeled "Cycle of Fear," was one of four hypothesized in the recently released report, "Mapping the Global Future: Report of the National Intelligence Council's 2020 Project." The

119-page document was produced by the National Intelligence Council (NIC), the intelligence community's think tank. Every five years, the organization interviews a thousand or more outside experts from around the world and takes a close look at global trends and how they might develop over the upcoming 15 years. The open and unclassified process is in stark contrast to the methods used to produce the NIC's most famous recent document, the top secret October 2002 National Intelligence Estimate on the threat posed by Iraq. "We believe," warned that study, "that Iraq has intensified its efforts in recent years to develop technologies that could support a nuclear weapons program." It then cited reports about "the existence of secret nuclear projects at Tuwaitha and elsewhere." It also raised the alarm about chemical weapons and drones loaded with biological agents ready to

decline in power, China and India's strength will increase, and there will be "pervasive insecurity." "Weak governments, lagging economies, religious extremism, and youth bulges will align to create a perfect storm for internal conflict in certain regions," according to the report. It adds, "At their most extreme, internal conflicts can result in failing or failed states, with expanses of territory and populations devoid of effective governmental control. Such territories can become sanctuaries for transnational terrorists (such as al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan) or for criminals and drug cartels (such as in Colombia)." On a positive note, while regional conflicts will likely increase, "the likelihood of great power conflict escalating into total war in the next 15 years is lower than at any time in the past century, unlike during previous centuries when local conflicts sparked world wars."

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S MILITARY ACTIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST HAVE PROVIDED TERRORISTS WITH "A TRAINING GROUND."

attack the east coast of the United States. All of these warnings turned out to be completely false. It demonstrates what happens when the NIC seeks to tell the White House what it wants to hear.

By contrast, the results of "Mapping the Global Future" are definitely not what this White House would like to hear. The landscape the report paints is one in which the United States will

As the report suggests in its "Cycle of Fear" scenario, the Bush administration's military actions in the Middle East, especially its invasion of Iraq, have provided terrorists with "a training ground, a recruitment ground, the opportunity for enhancing technical skills," according to David B. Low, the NIC officer responsible for transnational threats. Forced out of Afghanistan, "professionalized" terrorists

have now turned Iraq into their new boot camp. NIC Chairman Robert L. Hutchings, the former assistant dean of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University, summed up the problem: "At the moment [Iraq] is a magnet for international terrorist activity."

Worse, many of these newly minted terrorists will eventually disperse back to their home countries or other locations and spread their skills like a contagious infection. According to the report, "The al-Qa'ida membership that was distinguished by having trained in Afghanistan will gradually dissipate, to be replaced in part by the dispersion of the experienced survivors of the conflict in Iraq We expect that by 2020 al-Qa'ida will have been superseded by similarly inspired but more diffuse Islamic extremist groups, all of which will oppose the spread of many aspects of globalization into traditional Islamic societies." Over the next decade and a

Around the world, the United States continues to decline in prestige. At home it is constantly losing financial strength as the Treasury pays out more than \$2 billion a week to fund the wars in Iraq and on terrorism, adding to a nearly half a trillion dollar budget deficit and digging the U.S. trade deficit ever deeper—now past \$3 trillion, in large part as a result of the constant inward flow of Chinese-made products. Sitting quietly on the side, China and India patiently watch and wait. In the Washington of 2020, these two economic powerhouses "will be the most challenging of all" says the report. And in the area of technological advances, the United States "may lose its edge" to Asia in some areas. The report warns, "US preoccupation with the war on terrorism is largely irrelevant to the security concerns of most Asians." Rather than focus on Middle East conflicts, the report says U.S. policymakers must "offer Asian states an appealing vision of

economic Forum to a former US Federal Reserve chairman on the eve of the annual Davos meeting in 2020." As the letter makes clear, it is Asia that the world now admires. "At the turn of the century," says the fictional letter, "we equated globalization with Americanization. America was the model. Now globalization has more of an Asian face and, to be frank, America is no longer quite the engine it used to be. Instead the markets are now oriented eastwards."

Despite the significance of the NIC's findings, it is unlikely that the report ever fell under the president's gaze. During his State of the Union address, George W. Bush never made a single mention of China. Rather, the speech was chockablock with how the U.S. should impose democracy throughout the world—a perfect recruiting pitch for terrorists around the globe. As the report notes, throughout Asia "present and future leaders are agnostic on the issue of democracy and are more interested in developing what they perceive to be the most effective model of governance."

The Bush administration's twin obsessions—a war in the Middle East and a war against terrorism—are hardly the "model of governance" sought by nations as they progress toward 2020. As the NIC report makes clear, they only cause more terrorism and bring on economic ruin as well. If the administration is determined to wage an expensive war, it would be far more useful to disengage from the Middle East and focus on an enemy that affects the entire planet, such as AIDS or cancer or heart disease. ■

James Bamford is the author of The Puzzle Palace and Body of Secrets, both about the National Security Agency. His most recent book is A Pretext For War: 9/11, Iraq and the Abuse of America's Intelligence Agencies.

ACCORDING TO THE BEST ANALYSIS, THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S MUCH BALLYHOODED WAR ON TERROR WILL BE WORSE 15 YEARS FROM NOW THAN IT IS TODAY.

half, the NIC predicts, while the terrorists will continue to express a strong interest in acquiring chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons, "terrorist attacks will continue to primarily employ conventional weapons, incorporating new twists and constantly adapting to counterterrorist efforts. Terrorists probably will be most original not in the technologies or weapons they use but rather in their operational concepts—i.e., the scope, design, or support arrangements for attacks." Thus, according to the best analysis of the CIA and the rest of the intelligence community, the Bush administration's much ballyhooed War on Terror will be worse 15 years from now than it is today.

regional security and order that will rival and perhaps exceed that offered by China." If it doesn't, "US disengagement from what matters to US Asian allies would increase the likelihood that they will climb on Beijing's bandwagon and allow China to create its own regional security that excludes the United States." Beijing will likely turn to the European Union, instead of the United States, as "a model of global and regional governance."

The NIC again makes use of a hypothetical scenario—this one called "Davos World"—to illustrate. But instead of furtive e-mails between arms dealers, this situation involves "a hypothetical letter from the head of the World Eco-

Bush's Napoleon Complex

What the French experience in Spain could teach us about Iraq

By Gregory Cochran

NO TWO WARS are ever the same any more than you can step on the same banana peel twice. That said, Napoleon's invasion and occupation of Spain, from 1808 to 1814—the war that gave us the word “guerrilla” and was immortalized in Goya's “Third of May,” the war that drained France's army, smashed Napoleon's reputation for invincibility, and left Spain thrashing like a broken-backed snake for decades—has striking similarities to our invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Both wars started under the influence of similar delusions. Napoleon thought that the Spanish would roll over and play dead as so many other European states had; he thought marching to Madrid and placing his brother Joseph on the throne would complete the subjugation of Spain. We pretty much thought the same: crushing Saddam's army would be easy; we would then install a pro-American government (Ahmad the Thief) and have most of our Army home by fall.

The invasions went well, as expected, but in each case a tiresome guerrilla war broke out. The French eventually lost over a quarter of a million men in “the Spanish ulcer,” as Napoleon called it, while Iraq has tied down half of the Army and is costing us more than \$75 billion a year. What went wrong? As it turns out, Boney and Bush made some of the same mistakes.

Despite his tremendous organizational skills, Napoleon never managed to establish authority in Spain. He smashed the Bourbon state without ever

being able to replace it with his own. We've done the same in Iraq. We have been much more systematic about it, sacking the Iraqi army and banning most of the top layer of Ba'athist civil servants from government employment. The French made their mistakes rather casually: “Who wouldn't want to have my big brother as king?” Napoleon seems to have thought. On the other hand, our administration seems to have tried to fail, going out of its way to alienate and radicalize the entire Iraqi ruling class.

Like the French, we've managed not to have much of a side in Iraq: few Iraqis seem eager to wage war in our interest. Some of them are against us, while for the most part the others just watch as if it's not their fight. We hear a lot about how Iraqi National Guard units need more training. The true problem is that they're short on motivation. The insurgents manage to fight without years of professional training. The French too had some Spanish troops, who usually deserted at the first opportunity. They didn't make up fantasies about a training deficiency to explain it.

Both Spain and Iraq had notoriously inefficient armies, and that must have made the idea of invasion seem more plausible. The Spanish were certainly weaker and easier to beat (in conventional battles) than the Prussians or Austrians, while the Iraqis—some of the worst soldiers the world has ever seen—have been known to surrender to a film crew in an unarmed helicopter back in 1991. Compared to them, the

Italians of World War II were unkillable demons of battle.

The odd thing is that the same qualities that make an army fight well—strong central control, discipline, and a grassroots inclination to co-operate and obey orders—also allow it to surrender completely, rather like a CEO and his dominatrix. According to historian John Tone in *The Fatal Knot*, the French in Napoleon's time found the “Germans and Austrians, conditioned by militarism and centralization, unable or unwilling to act without the permission of their superiors.” We've seen it too, more recently: the Germans fought all too well in World War II but once defeated were quiet as mice under Allied occupation. The Japanese went further in that direction: willing, even eager, to die for the Emperor, more fanatical than any other army in history, they were utterly peaceful after surrender. Of course, Donald Rumsfeld seems to think that those post-World War II occupations were plagued by guerrilla resistance—but then, he also thinks that Iraq is a lot like colonial America: you know, prosperous, bourgeois, literate, British, Protestant, used to self-government and rule of law. Most likely he's from some other dimension. If only we could get him to say his name backwards.

The general disorganization in Spain and Iraq seems paradoxical. The Bourbons were autocratic by the standards of the day, while Saddam's Iraq was a

notorious dictatorship. But that hardly means that their central governments controlled everything. It just means that they wanted to. In Spain, attachment to village and province was more robust than national feeling, while most Iraqis are still tribalists. There obviously can be a number of reasons for the lack of a strong attachment to the state—considering Verdun and Stalingrad, maybe we'd all be better off without one—but Iraq and Spain shared at least one reason: they were rentier states. Most government revenue came from an exterior source, not from the sweat of taxpayer brows—Latin American silver for Spain, oil for Iraq. European governments (for example, Prussia) had modernized, built efficient administrations, and forged strong ties to the middle classes that paid the bills. They had to in order to compete. As long as the mines in Potosi held out, Spain didn't have to. Saddam didn't have to either, not as long

as he held the second-largest oil reserves in the world.

Such countries are weak in actual combat, even when their hardware looks impressive. The Spanish had the largest ship in the world at Trafalgar, the *Santisima Trinidad*, while Saddam had all kinds of fancy toys in the Gulf War. How

verse as this. Of course, they didn't have PowerPoint in those days.

Religion mattered in Spain. It matters in Iraq, too. Napoleon didn't think it would, and certainly the seers who created our Iraq policy didn't. In Spain, priests told the peasants that the invaders threatened their festivals, their saints,

GOVERNMENT REVENUE CAME FROM AN EXTERIOR SOURCE, NOT FROM THE SWEAT OF TAXPAYER BROWS—LATIN AMERICAN SILVER FOR SPAIN, OIL FOR IRAQ.

did that work out? The two countries' high cash flow, combined with military weakness, made them tempting targets. Napoleon certainly expected to get a lot of revenue from Spain, and although the U.S. government denies it, I have to think that we would have had trouble staying interested in Iraq if it had nothing but sand.

There were many young Spaniards with idle hands back in 1808. Much of the regular Spanish army had disintegrated, and the economy was generally depressed because of the economic warfare between Britain and France. Iraq is like that—only more so. Iraqi oil is valuable, but Iraqi labor is not: if not for oil, the per capita GDP of Iraq would be less than Haiti's. There was hardly any Iraqi economy at all during most of the 1990s, thanks to the sanctions, and the Keynesian stimulus effect of an invasion is overrated. There are few private-sector jobs in Iraq, nothing to keep young men busy. (By few, I mean that unemployment is much worse than in our Great Depression—postwar estimates range from 30 to 70 percent.) Iraq is a welfare state, with most of the population receiving government food rations. There is no work, yet at the same time, you can get by without working. Guerrillas don't have to worry about starving. The French ruined the Spanish economy, but they never came up with anything as per-

and the heart of their way of life. They portrayed the French as unwholesome enemies of God who deserved any punishment the peasants could come up with. We're a lot milder than French. We aren't bayoneting mullahs, but we are definitely a lot less wholesome. After Abu Ghraib, it's pretty easy to portray us as giggling perverts. You can get much the same impression just watching prime-time TV. (Note to our guys running al-Iraqiya TV: do not show the Everclear video "Volvo Driving Soccer Mom." Try "Gunsmoke." Titles can fool you.)

Wolfowitz of Arabia said, "The Iraqis are among the most educated people in the Arab world. They are by and large quite secular. They are overwhelmingly Shia, which is different from the Wahabis of the peninsula, and they don't bring the sensitivity of having the holy cities of Islam being on their territory." He really said that, on Feb. 26, 2003. He forgot that 40 percent of Iraqis are illiterate (more than any of their neighbors), forgot that Najaf and Karbala are the holy cities of the Shi'ite majority, forgot that Islam would be the only ideology left in Iraq with the fall of the Ba'athists. We now hear about martyrs and jihad every day of the week, while Sistani, a mullah's mullah, acts as the unofficial powerbroker of Iraq. I can't read men's souls, but it certainly looks as if our decision makers and Napoleon mirror-imaged the foe:

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they personally didn't take religion seriously and so found it hard to believe that anyone else did either.

Napoleon's army in Spain ended up controlling only the ground it stood on. The roads weren't safe—every supply convoy needed an armed escort. The struggle against guerrillas was never-ending. The French, who had thought of themselves as bringing enlightenment, ended up hating the Spanish. This all sounds terribly familiar, but the parallels do end. France lost, but the U.S. won't. Spain was weaker than France but not militarily insignificant, and it had Great Britain backing it with money, troops, and Wellington. We're hundreds of times stronger than Iraq. The U.S. may tire of a pointless war and leave, but we certainly won't lose battles.

The big question is why these mistakes were made. Napoleon didn't have much excuse: Spain was France's next-door neighbor. Their histories had been intertwined for hundreds of years. Plenty of Frenchmen knew Spain, lived in Spain, and spoke Spanish. But Napoleon was probably beginning to suffer from megalomania: he had succeeded to such a tremendous extent that perhaps all things seemed possible.

The Bush administration can always plead ignorance. Certainly few of the players knew much about Iraq, the Middle East, or Islam. Judging from their frequent confused historical references, it seems as if Condi and Rummie really don't know any history at all. But the administration didn't check with anyone who did know. In fact, it rejected every form of expert advice. I'm sure someone said "wouldn't be prudent"—but Bush wasn't in a mood to listen, and no advice, no intelligence briefing, can trump that. ■

Gregory Cochran is a physicist and evolutionary biologist with an interest in military history.

The former CIA chief in Baghdad is a suspect in the leaking of an assessment he wrote indicating that the security situation in Iraq was deteriorating.

The assessment, written last autumn, was an "appraisal of situation." The document, which had a comment from then Ambassador John Negroponte disagreeing with its conclusions, was widely circulated among American policy-makers in Washington. Nevertheless, when the negative appraisal was later written about in the national press, CIA referred the matter to the Department of Justice as an unauthorized leak of classified information. The chief, who was removed from his post in November 2004, has hired a private lawyer to represent him during the ongoing FBI investigation. The CIA complaint appears to have been made at the instigation of the White House, which was incensed over the negative assessment. Negroponte, who was also angered by the report, apparently played a major role in having the chief removed. Sources in Washington believe that the report was leaked by officials at the Department of Defense who oppose Iraq policy, not by the CIA chief.



The Department of Homeland Security might not participate in a conference of 400 senior police and public-health officers to be held in France

in March to consider an Interpol warning that no country in the world is prepared to deal with the consequences of a bio-terrorism attack. Homeland Security is concerned that attending the meeting might be bad PR, suggesting that the White House, which has done little to defend against such an attack, has not taken necessary steps to protect the continental United States. Interpol believes that such an attack is almost certainly coming from a group like al-Qaeda, which has the resources and will to use such a weapon. The gathering in Lyons will address the issue and encourage police and emergency management agencies to set up networks that will better share information on potential threats. Security experts believe that there is potential for a spectacular biological attack that could easily spread contagious disease across a broad, heavily populated area like Europe or the U.S. eastern seaboard.



The Abu Hafs al-Masri terrorist group has claimed in an Internet posting that a plan to launch a major terrorist operation in North America using "nuclear dust" is 95 percent completed.

Al-Masri, a propaganda outlet for al-Qaeda, has issued a number of misleading statements in the past year, but a document seized in Saudi Arabia from an al-Qaeda safe house also states that a new operation against "Americans" is in progress and the name of the operation is Cave of Darkness. Some antiterrorism analysts fear that the planned operation will involve a dirty bomb and the phrase refers to a radioactive cloud that would block out the sun. Other analysts believe there is no necessary connection between the Saudi document and the possibly rhetorical claims of the al-Masri group. FBI officials nevertheless consider the prospect of a radioactive conventional explosion inside the U.S. a serious threat.

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Praying to Newark

New York bureaucracy pauses for *salat*.

By Paul Moreland

AS MY LAWYER LIFE often requires, I recently whiled away an afternoon in a waiting room within New York City's Citizenship and Immigration Services office.

For the uninitiated, CIS is the former Immigration and Naturalization Service—or at least one broken-off piece of it. Like the other parts of the shattered INS, CIS falls under the auspices of the Department of Homeland Security. Perhaps that's why I find the replacement and reordering of naturalization—the process by which an alien becomes a citizen—and citizenship—bestowed upon those of us born here—a tad curious.

On this particular afternoon, two events interrupted the tedium of passing three hours in the frozen concentrate of diversity. The first, and far less interesting, was the sight of two Chinese lesbians fondling and kissing each other a few rows ahead of me.

The second unfolded a little more discretely. It began when two Muslim men, one elderly, the other of middling age, stood up in unison and surveyed the bus-station-like set-up. At 3:30 on a Christmas week afternoon, the room was unusually sparse. (The clerks, however, had adjusted their productivity downward to ensure that the wait was commensurate with any normal day, when the place resembles a bustling terminus on the Silk Road.)

Both men wore the skullcaps known as kufis and gown-like galabiyas and sported the bushy beards and disproportionately thin sideburns that are *au*

courant in Karachi this season. My instinctual reaction was, I'm certain, not dissimilar to that furtively harbored by many denizens of downtown Manhattan: could they have concealed weapons under there? But then I remembered the healing words of President Bush—"Islam is a religion of peace"—and chastised myself for having such an intolerant impulse.

After a moment of consultation, the pair proceeded to a rear corner, evidently the corner of the windowless, disorienting room determined to be facing Mecca. There they stood, shoulder to shoulder, in silent meditation. I turned back to the Camus paperback I was reading and his bleak picture of the interior of French Algeria as the younger man began to utter a guttural strophe that to my uninitiated Catholic ear sounded like "Haaa Faaa."

We were presumably in the room for the same purpose—to attend an appointment in a federal office building, where it wasn't Christmas but a holiday season. Here religion is *noli me tangere*. This particular office caters to those inquiring into the status of mismanaged green-card applications, which in the New York district if piled up would compete for skyline with the best of Trump's skyscrapers. My inquiry involved an Italian filmmaker, theirs the elder Musselman.

The lack of reaction among my fellow travelers was stunning. A Dominican woman sitting nearby uttered a lilting "*Dios mio*." But there was no official reaction. The clerks didn't bat an eye.

The security guard continued to make his rounds. Had my cell phone's lowly ring reverberated through the room, I would have been ordered to leave and efforts to confiscate my phone would have ensued.

The two votaries transitioned from their standing posture to a kind of rhythmic bowing and finally into a repetitive genuflecting motion. As often happens these days, I found myself a stranger in a strange land—the strange land doubling as home.

In the past, in this same room, I've seen kindly Catholic priests escorting humble parishioners from hotter climates up to the counter to inquire as to why their green-card applications are older than any of their five children. I wonder what reaction an impromptu *angelus* in the other corner would evoke? And what of Felix Mota, another priest, of the Santeria order, who in 2003 got tangled up with Passaic police and the ASPCA over his ritualistic slaughter of two roosters and a lamb at a makeshift altar behind his religious supply store? "This is a great moment for me," the Cuban émigré triumphantly declared after completing the two-hour ritual. "For the first time, I feel I can openly practice my religion without interference."

The *salat*, or contact prayers, are the obligatory prayers that Muslims perform five times daily. They represent a direct link between the worshipper and God, with no earthly intermediaries such as the Department of Homeland Security.

Sadly, such prayers invariably conflict with appointments in federal office buildings. But one suspects that the day is fast approaching when the courts ensure that the appointments accommodate the prayers. After all, had the office been in its normal standing-room-only state, a dozen others might have followed these two to the corner.

Modern Western experience demonstrates that, as in France, as the Muslim population grows so too do demands for accommodation. American experience in particular tells that as long as a group earns the multicultural seal of approval, courts will meet its demands. One only need survey the number of kufis bobbing in the line coiling around the CIS office to conclude that the panels of prattling heads and their satellite-linked guests will soon be abuzz with talk of whether the federal government should break for *salat*.

The Founders were annoyingly vague in setting forth the precise parameters of the separation between church and state—much less a commensurate stricture between mosque and state. One overarching fact is crystalline though: the burner under the melting pot petered out long ago, but the cook continues to heap in the ingredients.

Evidently the call to prayer was in fierce competition with the desire to secure an immigration benefit, for the pair's ticket number flashed on the red LCD counter midway through. Rather than interrupting the prayer, a third, more secular companion dashed to the window, bantering in halting English to the clerk and motioning to the corner. As we all sat waiting for our numbers to flash—mine was still 20 away—the clerk, speaking a different dialect of broken English, agreed to wait for prayers to finish. We all waited.

Such are the subtle machinations of immigration policy that transfigure our culture like the perpetual trickle of

water against stone. Those with power to alter it—which apparently does not include the American people—are unwilling to do so. But as Americans as far away as the outer suburbs are beginning to see, the phenomenon will not long remain confined to our metropolises.

Back in my office, I continued research in connection with an asylum case for a gay man from an Islamic country, where the only parade sexual orientation gets is the one filing past as you get flogged. For the muddleheaded Left, which fails to notice that religious diversity in the Muslim world went out the door with Tariq Aziz, there is a gaping disconnect between this and the “expression of religious freedom” I witnessed earlier. Culture is portable.

On a personal level, Muslims *per se* do not bother me. To a certain degree they are cultural conservatives, and since it's doubtful one will ever be able safely to

visit them in their native environments, the opportunity to observe *salat* was not without benefit. But the ramifications of absorbing millions more of their coreligionists from across their vast realm, importing with them every variant of Islam—some inimical in varying shades to the West—are rarely discussed with ease. Hence, there are more American boots on the ground preventing Muslims from entering Iraq than there are doing likewise on the Rio Grande.

As a long day drew to a close, a different aspect of the afternoon's event began to nag at me. Just how did they know that particular corner of the windowless room faced the twin minarets of Mecca? Evidently they didn't, for a review of a map of Manhattan revealed the two were actually praying to Newark. ■

Paul Moreland is the pen name of an immigration lawyer in New York City.

Songs of the Doomed

Hunter S. Thompson (1939-2005)

By Anthony Gancarski

“PERHAPS HE FOUND what he came here for, but the odds are huge that he didn't. He was an old, sick, and very troubled man, and the illusion of peace and contentment was not enough for him—not even when his friends came up from Cuba and played bullfight with him in the Tram. So finally, and for what he must have thought the best of reasons, he ended it with a shotgun.”

In 1964, Hunter S. Thompson wrote these words about the recent suicide of Ernest Hemingway, a writer whose work spoke to billions because it was

plain, clear, hard, and unsentimental. Thompson's burden in 1964 was to pay homage to a genius. He understood, *vis-à-vis* Hemingway and other matters, that “when the going gets weird the weird turn pro.” But his words in eulogy to Hemingway spoke an existential truth: no matter how deeply professional a craftsman is, the dark patches in his soul often can't be faced by even the most courageous writer.

Hunter Thompson, the self-proclaimed original “political junkie,” saw politics itself as addictive in the sense of the best

narcotics. Unfortunately, Thompson's addiction to politics only forestalled the inevitable: the iconoclastic journalist shot himself in his home on President's Day weekend, thus meriting a slew of tributes of his own. If there was a bright side, Thompson's suicide allowed him to have the funeral he planned: in accordance with his wishes, Thompson was cremated, his ashes shot across the land he died on from a cannon. Though ashes from cremation are notoriously clumpy with composition unpredictable, the visual of the ashes flying across the property trumped logistical concerns and provided a working metaphor for Thompson's life. Even in death, it seemed, the inveterate showman wanted a spectacle no one in public life could top.

The 67-year-old Thompson fused the stylistic predilections of H.L. Mencken and Henry Miller into an oft-misunderstood genre, gonzo journalism, that was so rococo and extreme that it could not be replicated by others or even done with consistency by Thompson himself. He regarded the gonzo style as liberation from having to write "like the *New York Times*," which he compared to "falling down an elevator shaft and landing in a pool full of mermaids."

But in the long run, Thompson's much-derided creation proved to be his undoing. The deeper into the gonzo mindset Thompson got, the less consistent his output. His tendencies toward self-parody were abetted by sycophantic enablers. There were more misses than hits in Thompson's erratic and exasperating career, especially in the late innings. Editors would often indulge the superstar scribe by leaving intact his wildest departures from established forms, and the finished product naturally suffered. Yet despite Thompson's much-remarked excesses and shortcomings, his body of work is interesting not just to those on the Left but to all

fans of American letters. Hunter Thompson began his career as a deadline journalist; he ended it as a stylistic progenitor with the bad luck to leave no heir to his invention.

But Thompson inherited his style from no one—it was part of the evolution of his early craft. Well before he developed gonzo journalism, the Louisville native practiced his art somewhat more traditionally. Thompson arguably first hit his stride in the 1960s with *Hell's Angels*, a jarring, accessible, and piquant study of the iconic California biker gang. Thompson showed admirable versatility writing this book and found a way to explain a nascent, subversive subculture to eager book-buying squares. It was as if Thompson, in writing about the biker gang, allegorically was fashioning the archetype of the "outlaw journalist" that he would grow to embody.

Further forays into the devil's handiwork—deadline journalism—found Thompson sharpening his aim, and finding that his favorite target by far was former Vice President Richard Nixon. Thompson was able to score an interview with the candidate during the 1968 campaign: Pat Buchanan pulled Thompson out of the press pool under the condition that they only talk football. Thompson, to his surprise and unmistakable chagrin, was forced to note that Nixon "not only knew the players, but the colleges they went to."

The scene was recounted in great detail in Thompson's most interesting political book, *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail, 1972*. But what really resonated was Thompson's writing about the primaries—especially the Florida primary, which featured a zonked-out Sen. Ed Muskie, the frontrunner, losing control of himself at a campaign stop during a Florida train tour. Thompson drew pictures of the Democratic hacks vying for the 1972 nomination that were so lurid yet

unsparing that it actually seemed inevitable that South Dakota archliberal George McGovern would win the nomination.

The brilliance of *Campaign Trail* was only in part rooted in a Faulknerian eye for garish details about the Democratic field. Much of the book's power—especially for reviewers of the Left—came from the book's dense compilation of attacks on Richard Nixon, Thompson's political *bête noire*. But Hunter had many similarities to Nixon. Both men worked their way up the hard way, sacrificing material comforts and safety in order to get a necessary job done. Thompson, like Nixon, was a secretive man. Nixon reportedly considered suicide during his career's ebb after the Watergate mess; Thompson did more than consider it in the end. And though the writer outlived the politician, it could be argued that without Nixon to take hacks at, Thompson was dead as a writer already.

Consider the last three decades of Thompson's career. He was the first man to advance so many of the poison memes about the Nixon administration that provided grist for bringing Tricky Dick down. But the 1972 campaign proved to be Thompson's undoing as a cutting-edge commentator; he was outworked by his peers. He was a nonfactor in Watergate, his status as an erratic columnist for a monthly magazine inhibiting his ability to break news in a timely and sexy manner. Thompson devolved into self-parody and emerged just in time for the 1976 presidential race—where he endorsed Georgia Gov. Jimmy Carter after the Democrat made some vague campaign-trail promises about redressing social injustice if elected.

By then, the malaise that kept Thompson from being the first-rate journalist he once aspired to be had set in. Doctor Gonzo frittered away the '80s writing

about ephemera like the Palm Beach soirée set. When Thompson did write about politics, he seemed reduced to returning to his familiar characterizations of Republicans as savage blood-thirsty curs and so forth. The 1990s and another Southern Democrat, Bill Clinton, came along—and Thompson was notoriously unready to meet that challenge, though he did get off a good line on the subject: “Clinton has all the sense of loyalty of a lizard... and the midnight taste of a man who might go on a double date with the Rev. Jimmy Swaggart.”

Colorful language, but ultimately such descriptions revealed nothing new about the subject and, in fact, exposed the writer’s shortcomings. Unable to make original insights or to report in the classic sense, Thompson became a celebrity provocateur, cashing royalty checks and recycling his old comments in both spirit and letter. His 1994 eulogy for President Nixon hit all the familiar 1972 spots, charging that Nixon was a “political monster” and “an evil bastard” with the moral sense of a cornered badger. But Thompson’s insight on the departed president was no richer for the passage of the two decades since Nixon left office—thus leaving the distinct impression that Thompson simply wasn’t a journalist anymore. He was just another celebrity, working a shtick until it didn’t draw anymore.

And so it was that Thompson, rather than internalizing the lessons of the profession he covered his entire life, heaped opprobrium on Nixon’s corpse from his column perch: “If the right people had been in charge of Nixon’s funeral, his casket would have been launched into one of those open-sewage canals that empty into the ocean just south of Los Angeles. He was a swine of a man and a jabbering dupe of a president. Nixon was so crooked that he needed servants to help him screw his pants on every morning. Even his

funeral was illegal. He was queer in the deepest way. His body should have been burned in a trash bin.”

Dancing a jig on Nixon’s grave, in that sense, was part of the game. But his last, *pro forma*, ritualistic act of defilement could only forestall the inevitable. In writing this eulogy for Nixon, which really was little more than a rehash of familiar and comfortable libels, Thompson was signaling his own obsolescence.

The post-9/11 world found him an increasingly irrelevant figure, reduced to condemning the current president from the ESPN website, recycling the same ideas and language he used during his heyday about San Clemente’s favorite son. But it was to no avail. Thompson was washed up. He could’ve been a contender, as they say, but he

ended up as a prop in a stage play. His last major political act was an endorsement of John Kerry in the 2004 general election; this after Kerry had Thompson sign some old books of his for the Massachusetts senator for the benefit of the working press. In this vein, Thompson made an incoherent appearance on Tim Russert’s program; at one point, he actually yelped. The yelp wasn’t edited off the tape.

Hunter Thompson is dead, his physical remains ashed to dust. His legacy? A cul-de-sac of wasted potential and half-baked ideas. But when he was on, as he was for a short while, he was legendary. ■

Anthony Gancarski writes from Jacksonville, Fla.

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Arts & Letters

FILM

["Up and Down" and "Head-On"]

Camp of the Not so Sainly

By Steve Sailer

THE EUROPEAN establishment has long silenced discussion of immigration by demonizing restrictionists, such as the murdered Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn, as racists. Last November's assassination of filmmaker Theo van Gogh by a Dutch-born Muslim extremist, however, has finally made the topic central to European politics.

Immigration in Central Europe is explored in "Up and Down" and "Head-On," two memorable movies with forgettable titles. While the high-velocity "Head-On," a jolting love story about cocaine-sniffing young Turks, looks at assimilated immigrants in Hamburg, the more staid "Up and Down" examines the impact of new immigrants on native Czechs in Prague.

"Up and Down" is the kind of ensemble comedy-drama that appeals more to critics than audiences, who want star vehicles and happy endings. With a title recalling "Upstairs, Downstairs," "Up and Down" deftly traces the unexpected intersection of a troubled upper-middle-class family out of a Milan Kundera novel about heroic dissidents with deplorable sexual morals and a lumpenproletariat network of illegal immigrant smugglers and skinhead soccer hooligans.

While lecturing on immigration, a professor—revered for his costly defiance of the old Warsaw bloc puppet regime—

collapses. When told he needs a potentially lethal operation, he announces to his teenage daughter and her beautiful mother that he wants to see his son, who hasn't written to him since emigrating to Australia, and to divorce his wife.

The abandoned wife learns that her husband won back in the post-Velvet Revolution courts the beautiful house the Communist Party threw them out of as punishment for his anti-Soviet activities and has been living in it with his mistress, while she has been stuck in a neighborhood recently overrun by thieving Gypsies. Normally a cheery soul popular in Prague's traditional beer halls, this woman scorned is outraged to hear that her husband's chic girlfriend works for a government agency that subsidizes the asylum-seekers who steal from her.

Meanwhile, a working-class wife with an Amélie haircut and an infertility problem is desperate for a baby, but her loving husband, a dim security guard played endearingly by Jirí Macháček, is ineligible to adopt because of his soccer riot assault conviction. So she buys a dark-skinned South Asian baby from two illegal alien traffickers, to the anguish of her harelip husband. He fears he'll be excommunicated by his quasi-fascist soccer-fan buddies, who worry that blue-collar lugs like themselves are being forced out by low-wage Asian newcomers. (As in "American History X," in which Edward Norton plays an evil skinhead, the script gives the xenophobes most of the good lines.)

Soon, though, the big oaf is infatuated with his tiny brown son. Sure, the dumb brute with the heart of gold is a cliché, but that's because he's such an emotionally resonant archetype.

In Fatih Akin's funny and disturbing "Head-On," a suicidally glum busboy at a Hamburg punk-rock bar, who has

almost forgotten his native Turkish, agrees to a fake, sexless marriage to a pretty but slutty Turkish girl. She needs a Turkish husband to move out of her patriarchal father's house so she can sleep around and take drugs.

"Head-On" begins as a raucous reworking of "The Odd Couple" as a punk romantic comedy. When the bride nicely redecorates her pseudo-groom's squalid apartment, replacing his Siouxsie and the Banshees poster with throw pillows, he snorts, "It looks like a chick-bomb exploded in here." (Modern love stories need these kinds of plot contrivances to delay consummation.) But her *Carmen*-like promiscuity leads to tragedy and an impassioned coda in Istanbul.

Many pundits advocate assimilation as the sure cure for any problems caused by immigration, but few ask, "assimilation toward what?" In America, for example, immigrant kids often assimilate toward gangsta-rap norms. German culture, still despised and depressed 60 years after 1945, lacks the confidence in its own coolness that African-Americans possess, so Hamburg's hipsters, both German and Turkish, assimilate instead toward the decadent styles of the old London and New York punk scenes.

True believers in assimilation assume that young Turks educated in Germany will naturally want to write a new *Eroica* symphony or found the next Mercedes-Benz, but "Head-On" suggests that they actually want to re-enact "Sid and Nancy," Alex Cox's 1986 classic about Sex Pistols bassist Sid Vicious and junkie-groupie Nancy Spungeon, the two most worthless people ever to fall madly in love. "Head-On" isn't quite as stunning as "Sid and Nancy," but it's close. ■

Both are rated R for sex and violence.

BOOKS

A Factually Correct Guide for Max Boot

By Thomas E. Woods Jr

MY BOOK *The Politically Incorrect Guide to American History* has received far more attention than I ever expected. Once the book hit number eight on the *New York Times* bestseller list, the *Times*' editorial page condemned it without actually showing where its arguments were mistaken; several weeks later, to my surprise, the *Times* published a favorable profile of me. The controversy surrounding the book has reached at least two other continents: Brazil's *Folha de S. Paulo*, with the highest circulation of any newspaper in Latin America, published a full interview with me, as did a major Catholic newspaper in Ireland. The *Times* of London, for its part, published a more or less positive piece about the book.

Among conservatives the reception has been mostly favorable: Pat Buchanan praised the book on the "McLaughlin Group," Gary Bauer called it one of the top five books of 2004, and positive reviews appeared in such outlets as *Human Events* and this magazine. But neoconservative attacks on the book have also begun to surface, the most recent of which was by Max Boot.

Boot's review appeared in the online version of the neoconservative *Weekly Standard*. Mind you, the print version of the *Weekly Standard* had already reviewed the book favorably. Reviewer James W. Haley Jr. said that my book "is ultimately about truth" and is one that "everyone interested in American history should have in his library." "It is not surprising," he observed, "that a history guide written by a professor with an undergraduate degree from Harvard and

a doctorate from Columbia made it onto the *New York Times* bestseller list. What is surprising—refreshingly so—is that a text that challenges the liberal canon has so resonated with the American public."

Max Boot didn't find it quite so refreshing. Having seen the book (erroneously) described in the *New York Times* as "a neocon retelling" of American history, he grew curious and got a copy. Boot is right about one thing: the description of my book as neocon was simply idiotic; distinctions like neoconservative and paleoconservative are typically lost on the *Times*.

What is so revealing about Boot's critique, though, and what in fact makes his review newsworthy, is that it conclusively proves what traditional conservatives have consistently alleged: neoconservatism, at root, is merely a variety of leftism. Boot's criticism of my work, in fact, is almost identical to that of the *New York Times*.

Early on, Boot explains, *The Politically Incorrect Guide* "starts to slip from conventional history into a Bizarro world where every state has the right to disregard any piece of federal legislation it doesn't like," a position its author derives "mainly the writings of the Southern pro-slavery politician John C. Calhoun." What my book actually says is that important early Americans held the view that the states could refuse to enforce unconstitutional federal legislation and that both

extent of its own powers, the states will wind up completely eclipsed as the federal government hands down rulings in its own favor. The states had to have some corporate mechanism for resisting federal usurpations if they were not to be absorbed by the federal government.

I understand why Boot, a neoconservative nationalist, wants to avoid letting people know that it was Jefferson who came up with this "Bizarro" idea, since most Americans have an abiding respect for Jefferson and might be inclined to give his ideas a fair hearing. Boot prefers instead to attribute the idea solely to the "pro-slavery" Calhoun in order to taint it with the brush of slavery and get back to the neoconservative business of defending federal supremacy.

Professor Kevin Gutzman has shown that the principles behind nullification had in fact been germinating for 10 years, developing from ideas and positions that were taken for granted at the Virginia ratifying convention even by the Federalists, who most favored political centralization. Boot's treatment of the subject reveals not the slightest acquaintance with any of this; my active imagination has simply invented some "Bizarro world" in which these ideas were taken seriously.

Boot then writes that I am "particularly upset about the 14th Amendment (he claims it was never lawfully ratified)

BOOT'S CRITIQUE CONCLUSIVELY PROVES WHAT TRADITIONAL CONSERVATIVES HAVE CONSISTENTLY ALLEGED: NEOCONSERVATISM, AT ROOT, IS MERELY A VARIETY OF LEFTISM.

North and South had recourse to this mechanism at one time or another during the 19th century. As for relying "mainly" on Calhoun, in an 11-page chapter on the subject my discussion of Calhoun amounts to half a page. My main source, in fact, is Thomas Jefferson.

Jefferson's concern was this: if the federal government is allowed to have the final, authoritative word on the

because it barred former Confederates from holding political office." Read my Reconstruction chapter for yourself and consider the effort it must have taken Boot to misrepresent it this extent. My concern about the Fourteenth Amendment has nothing to do with its disqualification of former Confederates; I raise that issue in a single paragraph in order to show that a variety of reasons existed

for Southern opposition to the amendment.

The book's point about the Fourteenth Amendment is that it gave the federal government an opening through which it could trample on the states' rights of self-government. The 1990s were filled with state ballot initiatives that were imperiously overturned by federal judges on Fourteenth Amendment grounds. As for my "claim" that it was unlawfully ratified, Forrest McDonald—you know, that big extremist—in the *Georgia Journal of Southern Legal History* (Spring/Summer 1991) most recently laid out the scholarly argument for this position, which is about as iron-clad as you could ask for. Boot appears never to have heard of it.

Later in his review, Boot defends Harry Truman against my charge that in committing American troops to South Korea in 1950, he disregarded his constitutional duty to ask Congress for a declaration of war. That happens to have been the view of Sen. Robert A. Taft,

setting in that relatively minor affair.) The book's discussion of presidential war powers makes perfectly clear just how limited the Framers of the Constitution intended them to be. There is no room for debate here: I am right and Boot is spectacularly and outrageously wrong.

After finishing my book, Boot says he was curious to find out more about me. His painstaking research into my background brought up not the fairly substantial trail of scholarly publication that an impartial search might reveal, but rather simply my membership in an organization called the League of the South. Boot then launches into a caricature of the league based on a couple of cherry-picked quotations. I've addressed this issue at length in a Feb. 19 entry on the LewRockwell.com blog.

In this venue let me simply point out what Paul Gottfried once told me: by and large, the neocons detest Southerners and Germans. The older conservatism of Richard Weaver and Russell

warning, which led the United States into the war." Boot is actually surprised that American merchant ships, outfitted on Wilson's orders with Navy guns and staffed with Navy crews and instructed to fire upon any surfacing submarine, would be sunk by the Germans.

As for the Belgian atrocities, which I describe as "largely fabricated" (since they were), Boot also dissents. The point he misses is that although the Germans were indeed brutal in Belgium in suppressing a guerrilla uprising whose size they gravely overestimated, it was the tales of children having their hands cut off and corpses being made into margarine that outraged civilized opinion. And it was these sadistic and bizarre crimes, described in the Bryce Report, that were fabrications for propaganda purposes. When Clarence Darrow offered to pay \$1,000 (\$17,000 in today's money) to anyone who could show him a Belgian boy whose hands had been cut off by a German soldier, no one took him up on it.

Boot continues: "The real atrocity, [Woods] thinks, was Britain's naval blockade of Germany." Well, yes, as a matter of fact that is what I think. Britain's hunger blockade of Germany, which violated accepted norms of international law in more than one respect, resulted in 750,000 civilian deaths—about 150 times the number of Belgian civilians most scholars say were killed by the Germans.

Boot then proceeds to mischaracterize the Zimmerman telegram as "the document in which Germany's foreign minister offered Mexico the return of the American Southwest if it would declare war on the United States." Some might consider it relevant that the telegram began by noting that the Germans hoped to keep the U.S. neutral but that if they were unsuccessful and the United States entered the war against them, they wished to contract an alliance with Mexico.

Shortly after the Second World War, George Kennan wondered, "Today if one were offered the chance of having back again the Germany of 1913—a Germany

WHEN CLARENCE DARROW OFFERED TO PAY \$1,000 (\$17,000 IN TODAY'S MONEY) TO ANYONE WHO COULD SHOW HIM A BELGIAN BOY WHOSE HANDS HAD BEEN CUT OFF BY A GERMAN SOLDIER, NO ONE TOOK HIM UP ON IT.

who was known in his day as "Mr. Republican." (We can only imagine Boot's opinion of Taft.) I don't seem to realize, according to Boot, that "previous presidents had sent U.S. troops into battle hundreds of times without any declaration of war."

This is a classic example of neoconservative obfuscation. The examples Boot is speaking of do not involve the president deploying troops in offensive operations against foreign governments. The first time that happened was in 1900, when William McKinley sent 5,000 American troops to China to suppress the Boxer Rebellion, a revolt of Chinese nationalists connected to the Chinese government. (Historian Walter LaFeber notes that few people at the time appreciated the precedent that McKinley was

Kirk possessed a deep and abiding respect and sympathy for the Southern tradition, which they would never have treated with the contempt and disgust that it typically receives in neoconservative circles today. Neocons yield to no one in their hatred of the Confederate battle flag, and their condemnations of such traditional Southern symbols read like press releases from the Southern Poverty Law Center.

As for Germans, Boot is particularly enraged at my World War I chapter (our reviewer being one of the seven or so people who still consider American entry into that war a good idea). According to Boot, I am "sympathetic to German militarists" and I think it was "Woodrow Wilson's fault that Germany began sinking American ships without

run by conservative but relatively moderate people, no Nazis and no Communists—a vigorous Germany, full of energy and confidence, able to play a part again in the balancing-off of Russian power in Europe, in many ways it would not sound so bad.” In other words, U.S. intervention in World War I, undertaken with the best of intentions, had been an exceedingly costly mistake. My point exactly.

Boot also criticizes me for having written, shortly after Sept. 11, “the barbarism of recent American foreign policy was bound to lead to a terrorist catastrophe on American soil.” See how neoconservatism so easily degenerates into moral relativism. Is American foreign policy *ipso facto* admirable and beyond criticism simply because it is American? For that matter, why am I permitted to criticize our country’s abortion policy in no uncertain terms and be a decent citizen in good standing but not American foreign policy? Older conservatives, informed by the just-war tradition and more sensitive to the idea of absolute moral standards than to the amorality of Machiavelli, were capable of rendering critical judgments on their own governments. Richard Weaver, for instance, condemned the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as did Felix Morley, one of the founders of *Human Events*.

Given that Boot appears to have no serious gripe with much of anything in the mainstream narrative of American history—indeed, perhaps he should write *The Politically Correct Guide to American History*—it’s not surprising that he would become so hysterical at the sight of a book that really does take issue with that narrative. Since in my judgment Max Boot embodies everything that is wrong with modern conservatism, his opposition is about the best endorsement I could have asked for. ■

Thomas E. Woods Jr., who holds a Ph.D. in history from Columbia University, is the author, most recently, of The Church and the Market: A Catholic Defense of the Free Economy.

[*The Neocon Reader*, Irwin Stelzer, ed., Grove Press, 328 pages]

The Genius of Neoconservatism

By David Gordon

IRWIN STELZER BEGINS this useful collection with a warning: it is wrong to think that all neoconservatives share a fixed set of beliefs. “There is no such thing as a neoconservative ‘movement,’ in the dictionary definition of ‘a body of persons with a common object’.” Nevertheless, he acknowledges, there is a neoconservative “tendency” or “persuasion.” Though neoconservatives differ among themselves—Charles Krauthammer, for example, views the chances of worldwide democratic revolution much more skeptically than does Joshua Muravchik—their ideas have become influential in American foreign and domestic policy.

Why is this so? Stelzer and other contributors have a simple explanation. The neoconservatives have ideas of outstanding merit. And they defend these ideas with unmatched acuity: is it any wonder, then, that President Bush and Condoleezza Rice hasten to embrace their wisdom? As Max Boot tells us, “Neocons have been relatively influential because of the strength of their arguments, not their connections.”

Given this endorsement by a thinker so eminent as Max Boot, we can hardly wait: what are these new and wonderful ideas? Let us turn first to foreign policy, since the war to make Iraq safe for democracy is principally responsible for the vast public attention now devoted to neoconservatism. Like Marx in the *Communist Manifesto*, the neoconservatives “disdain to conceal their views and aims.” They begin from an undoubted fact: America is the most powerful nation in the world. We must use this power, not only to counter any threats directed against us, but also to

act pre-emptively against even the slightest possibility of a threat from a foreign power.

We must here avoid a mistake. We must not conceive of threats in an overly narrow fashion. It is not only the possibility of a threat to America that cries out for pre-emptive action; any threat anywhere in the world may require a violent American response. William Kristol and Robert Kagan say that were America to follow the policy they desire, “It would act as if instability in important regions of the world, and the flouting of civilized rules of conduct in those regions, are threats that affect us with almost the same immediacy as if they were occurring on our doorstep.... In Europe, in Asia, and in the Middle East, the message we should be sending to potential foes is: ‘Don’t even think about it.’” In an article not reprinted here, Kristol and Kagan responded to John Quincy Adams’s claim that “America goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy” with a remark of stunning brilliance: “why not?”

In particular, “rogue states,” such as Iran and Syria, might give atomic or biological weapons to terrorist groups. To counter this threat, the solution, as the neoconservatives see it, is obvious. We must overthrow the governments of these nefarious states: if we do so, we may breathe more easily, at least until the next possibility of a threat arises. Fortunately, this policy need not involve us in constant wars: it may suffice that we finance opposition groups, whose policies are more to our liking, within these states. Why start a war when a little subversion will do the trick? We can always bring out the big guns later.

As befits thinkers of acute intellect, the neoconservatives have more on offer than frightened endeavors to wipe out dangers before they become manifest. They hold before us a high ideal: America must bring the blessings of democracy to the world. To assume that some peoples are unsuited to our form of government is simply racist and condescending.

If one objects that this is warmed-over Wilsonianism, our thinkers stand ready with a pre-emptive response: "Not at all! Wilson had faith in international organizations, but we are not so foolish. Much better a guided missile or a 'smart bomb' to spread democracy than a resolution of the League of Nations." Max Boot puts the point well: "The neocons have scant regard for Wilson himself, whom they regard as hopelessly naïve. Instead they are 'hard Wilsonians', who place their faith not in pieces of paper, but in power, specifically U.S. power."

The mighty minds responsible for this concoction have overlooked a vital point. Is not foreign policy properly subject to the restraints of morality and international law? By what right does any country, however powerful, pre-

Iraqi civilians have died in massive numbers; every day brings news of American soldiers killed in bombing attacks; the war has cost billions of dollars; and policies of torture by American forces throw an ironic light on President Bush's repeated statements that we are bringing the blessings of liberty to the people of Iraq. Would it not be better, strictly from the point of view of defense itself, to adopt a less expansive view of what must be done to preserve America's security? Why not, for example, confine ourselves to countering likely threats rather than any possible threats?

Stelzer has had the good sense to include an essay by George Will that undermines the rationale for the idealistic side of neoconservative foreign policy, the attempt to impose democracy on all

sense of the word; it attains completion, only in the final victory of the new society on our entire planet." Likewise mistaken and risible are Adam Wolfson's efforts to find an antecedent for neoconservative foreign policy in John Locke's call for resistance to tyranny in his *Second Treatise*. Can he be unaware that Locke was writing about the conditions of political allegiance, not about foreign policy?

Wolfson is on stronger ground when he reminds us that neoconservatives do not confine their attention to foreign affairs. The neoconservative godfather, Irving Kristol, makes clear that their domestic agenda has little to recommend it. Kristol informs us that we must not worry about excessive government spending: "we should figure out what we want before we calculate what we can afford, not the reverse, which is the normal conservative disposition."

Kristol and company do not wish to finance bloated government expenditures with higher taxes; they rightly fear the malign effects of tax increases on incentives to productivity. Instead, deficits are the order of the day. Will not high government spending, though, crowd out private investment and inhibit economic growth? Robert Bartley appeals to the theory of Ricardian equivalence, as developed by Robert Barro, to defend deficits. Deficits, he tells us, "are in their economic effect indistinguishable from taxes." Perhaps so, but this hardly shows that worrying about deficits is foolish. It is not a good argument for the view that cyanide is not poisonous to point out that it is no worse than arsenic.

The neoconservatives' support for deficits rests on a benign view of big government. Friedrich Hayek's famous warning in *The Road to Serfdom* that economic planning can lead to totalitarianism does not commend itself to our authors. "Where libertarians worry that big government is liable to stamp out nearly all personal liberty," Adam Wolfson remarks, "neoconservatives see things quite differently. In their view, democracies tend to encourage the pur-

KRISTOL INFORMS US WE MUST NOT WORRY ABOUT GOVERNMENT SPENDING.

sume to subvert or forcibly overturn governments not to its liking? One would expect that supporters of policies so much at variance with traditional diplomatic practice would have something to say about the ethics of their revolutionary approach, but this volume leaves the topic unmentioned.

No doubt the neoconservatives will respond to this objection by invoking the need for defense. Can alleged dictates of morality or international law be invoked to hobble our efforts to defend ourselves? Surely, as German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg said when justifying the invasion of Belgium in 1914, "Necessity knows no law!"

As the case just mentioned aptly shows, appeals to the supposed necessity of immoral action often prove to be miserable failures by their own standards. Bethmann's policy did not preserve his nation but rather contributed essentially to a war that cost millions of lives and led to the fall of the dynasty it was his duty to defend. In like fashion, the neoconservative view that the bare possibility Saddam Hussein might threaten us with weapons of mass destruction justified a war to topple his regime has led to disaster.

and sundry. Will makes a simple but devastating point: "Iraq lacks a Washington, a Madison, a Marshall—and it lacks the astonishingly rich social and cultural soil from which such people sprout.... So, Iraq in its quest for democracy lacks only—only!—what America then had: an existing democratic culture."

The radical policy of forcing recalcitrant nations to be free has put some critics—one thinks in this connection of Claes Ryn's brilliant *America the Virtuous*—in mind of Trotskyite schemes of world revolution. Neoconservative rejoinders to this charge are singularly weak. Joshua Muravchik maintains that critics have misunderstood Trotsky's doctrine of "permanent revolution." Trotsky meant by this "an immediate seizure of power in hopes of somehow telescoping the bourgeois and socialist revolutions into one seamless sequence." Permanent revolution, Muravchik alleges, does not mean a movement to spread socialism from one country to another.

In point of fact, it is Muravchik who is in error. Trotsky made clear in his 1930 work *The Permanent Revolution*, "the socialist revolution becomes a permanent revolution in a newer and broader

suit of private interests to the neglect of all else, and thus it is the general welfare that is more likely to wither. The Hayekian analysis of big government has always seemed to the neoconservative overly simplistic as well as somewhat naïve."

No argument is offered to refute Hayek; what would one expect from a group that regards Irving Kristol, an intellectual journalist, as a more profound analyst of capitalism than one of the most distinguished economists and social philosophers of the 20th century? The neoconservatives fall far short of the intellectual virtues that they shamelessly ascribe to themselves, and our country is much the worse for their influence. ■

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[The Secret Wars of Judi Bari: A Car Bomb, the Fight for the Redwoods, and the End of Earth First!, Kate Coleman, Encounter Books, 261 pages]

The Red and the Green

By Marian Kester Coombs

BERKELEY INVESTIGATIVE journalist Kate Coleman has tackled such a madly fascinating subject that the Left has got to be kicking itself for failing to nip in first. Susan Faludi is slated to produce her own version of the Judi Bari story but not for another year. In the meantime, Coleman's book reverberates around the country, rekindling old feuds and provoking an entire political generation to re-examine the fates of some of its own.

Judith Beatrice Bari was born in 1949 to closet-Communist parents who were themselves the red-diaper babies of immigrants from the Old World. (Her elder sister, departing somewhat from

the family tradition, is the first-rate *New York Times* science writer and author Gina Kolata.) In her brief, high-testosterone life, Bari was an antiwar activist, college dropout, brown belt in karate, self-taught carpenter, divorced mother of two, and fiddle-playing Maoist labor organizer turned Wobbly turned Earth First! eco-heroine. Mysteriously carbombed in 1990, she survived only to succumb seven years later to a cancer even more aggressive than she was.

The book rests issues of immense consequence on the shoulders of this tiny woman—like the Rodgers and Hammerstein song, "only 60 inches high/Every inch is packed with dynamite"—and she proves tough enough to bear them. Born a leader and spoiling for a fight, Bari seems also to have been born to shine in tense situations that demanded immediate action. No word-mincing theoretician, she believed in the propaganda of the deed. Hers was a life of nonstop provocation, which exhilarated but endangered her (and others) as well.

Bari was one of those radicals who vault beyond the Marxist demand for "social justice" to insist on justice for "the earth." Modernity's totalization of the planet makes it possible to think of mankind as a thing in itself—either a part of or outside of nature, depending on how one conceives of nature—and to judge our relative worthiness as a species in ways that would never have occurred to earlier generations. The peculiar loathing that the French reserve for the Germans, that Armenians reserve for Turks, and Muslims for infidels can now be applied to the entire human race on behalf of its nonhuman "victims." Some have called this self-loathing the senile phase of mankind.

In the Pacific old-growth-forest wars, the contradiction at whose heart Judi Bari inserted herself was loggers' job security and right to work versus the claims of "deep ecology"—the right of sequoias and spotted owls to live unmolested by man. Bari tried to synthesize these antitheses by evoking the old Industrial Workers of the World (IWW or "Wobblies") ideal of green trade unionism, with little success.

Earth First! meant just that: all human priorities were to be considered last. In addition, her charge that lumber-company policies were driven by that great evil "profitability" ignored the well-known reality that socialism has been no guarantor of wilderness preservation either—quite the contrary.

Earth First! under Bari took the long-simmering, slow-acting contraries of the north woods and accelerated them to a sudden, violent head. Bari and her allies brought an alien sensibility not only to the small logging communities of Mendocino and Humboldt counties but to Earth First! itself, whose founders and idols like Dave Foreman and Edward Abbey liked to call themselves "Red-necks for Wilderness" and cared as little for egalitarian class-war ideology as Bari and company cared for EF's "sexist," "nativist" indifference to the proletariat.

Among the riches of *Secret Wars* is its confirmation that in terms of eccentrics, fabled England has nothing on the U.S. of A. Coleman's evocation of California's North Coast as a truly Wild West of lesbian collectives, "tree-huggers," pot-heads dwelling in geodesic domes, radicals on the lam, organic-gardening goddesses, troglodytic Vietnam vets, and every other kind of dreamer, dooper, and dissenter makes you hug yourself with delight at all the wondrous ways of being that freedom affords. What a great country! With Voltaire, one is moved once more to affirm the fervent oath defending to the death others' right to differ.

The book also shows, rather than preaches, that such true alternatives can only persist in an environment of extreme *laissez faire*, both in social attitudes and in political practice. Once self-righteous intolerance, dogmatism, and the chance to enrich or empower oneself through government arise, the fun is over.

Coleman's title and subtitle imply that after she was bombed, Bari increasingly came to war in secret against that all-purpose bogeyman "the FBI" and her own ex-husband, Mike Sweeney, to the detriment of her fight to save endangered old-growth redwoods, and that as a result she is at least in part responsible

for the end of Earth First! as an effective organization. In support of this thesis, Coleman turns over quite a rock: exposed beneath are backwoods feuds, ugly divorces, child-custody battles, stalking, poison-pen letters, lawsuits, entrapment, paranoia, multi-faced gossip, and a whole lotta pot-smoking. The most elusive mystery of all, of course, is who placed that pipe-bomb under the driver's seat of Bari's Subaru, causing it to explode in downtown Oakland on May 24, 1990, while she was in the midst of organizing the Redwood Summer campaign of protests.

Another of the book's entertaining features is how each player casts him-

been at loggerheads? Or did the FBI and the timber industry conspire to kill Bari and her sidekick, Darryl Cherney, and then, when the bomb blast merely injured the two, did the Bureau and Big Timber conspire to frame them for attempted "ecotage"?

The primary determinant of how you feel about Judi Bari is that old standby, "Which side are you on?" Kate Coleman is linked to David Horowitz, the former *Ramparts* editor who has gone on to neocon fame and fortune. And when some name-calling ("nasty," "selfish," "tyrannical") begins to ruffle the calm surface of Coleman's objectivity and her tone turns exasperated toward the end

help Coleman with her research, and now they are heatedly accusing her of being uninformed. It's to be hoped that Susan Faludi will do more than simply "reverse the charges" of who's lying about whom and actually get to the heart of Judi Bari.

It may or may not be significant that only a few months before *Secret Wars* was published, the Oakland police and several individual FBI agents were finally forced to start paying out more than \$4 million for false arrest, defamation, and First Amendment rights violations (although not for having perpetrated the bombing themselves), an amount Darryl Cherney and the Bari estate had been awarded after a decade of litigation.

Her book is so enjoyable, one regrets having to point out that Coleman does not solve the bombing mystery, nor does she determine whether Bari herself might have been capable of secretly breaching the nonviolence pledge of the redwoods coalition, nor does she answer whether or not these Earth First! actions succeed in slowing the destruction of irreplaceable redwood forest in the Pacific Northwest. Hopefully, Faludi's book will address these three major questions as well.

Meanwhile, the longing for the natural represented by EF and other groups remains strong. The sentiment expressed in Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, published in 1929 and revived by every generation since, is still with us: "Make a little room on the crippled earth! Depopulate it so that the grass may grow again and woods, meadows, heather, stream and moor return to this world of dust and concrete." For some the threat to the living environment is as visceral and intolerable as Edvard Munch felt it when "Alone and trembling with fear," he "experienced Nature's great scream," under red skies tinted by the eruption of Krakatau in 1883.

Judi Bari found sporadic joy among the ancient tree cathedrals but never peace, and it is peace that her unquiet spirit has yet to find. ■

Marian Kester Coombs writes from Crofton, Md.

OPPRESSION IS THE OXYGEN AND MOTHER'S MILK OF PROTEST MOVEMENTS.

self in the starring role of patient, forbearing, fair-minded, reasonable, sympathetic yet disinterested, discreet, and prescient *dramatis persona* (just as the author of this review is doing right now). Each of us is his own most brilliant spinmeister; even our confessions are strategic leaks designed to do damage control and win us the sympathy of the crowd. As a result, it is impossible for an outside observer to guess who is the prince or princess of liars here and who the long-suffering innocent bystander.

Anyone who has ever protested anything knows that oppression is the oxygen, life-blood, and mother's milk of protest movements. The complex interplay of informers, *agents provocateurs*, self-dramatizing redder-than-thou divas, and plain old bad blood further blurs the truth. Those who survive martyrdom, as Bari did, become heroes. Then dying young pours icing on the cake, not even to mention the distorting effect of the enduring whodunnit: as with JFK, so many people had so many motives to assassinate Bari. Did her ex-husband do it for revenge and to get his kids back? Or was it an anti-abortion fanatic outraged by Bari's mocking performance at a pro-life rally? Or was it one of the fed-up loggers with whom Earth First! had

of the book—for example, referring to Bari's "tired, fatuous Marxist cant"—those for whom such cant is the language of truth and beauty are entitled to conclude that Coleman is no comrade.

A long-time café proprietor in the area (not interviewed for the book) holds this view:

Judi Bari was thought of as an angel by those who knew her well. I felt her presence in the café when she was there and she was always very respectful and appreciative of the work I did for the enjoyment of others. ... She was like Joan Baez. She had that activist vibe, real star quality too. She had a huge heart and was loved by all who knew her. She was the heart of Earth First.

In the lull before Faludi's book appears, the Internet is buzzing with indignation, refutations, and denunciations of *Secret Wars* as a hit job "bought and paid for" by "far right wing" Encounter Books, a proven enemy of "strong women" for having published Laura Ingraham's *Hillary Trap*. Epithets like "shameless liar" and "pathological liar" and "lying psychopath" are being tossed about like hot potatoes. Most of the principals coldly refused to

A Highly Placed Confidant



“Several years ago, Charles gingerly broached the subject of Parker Bowles to his mother at dinner. ‘The queen said she never wanted to talk about

that wicked woman and wanted nothing to do with her,’ a ‘highly placed confidant of the prince’ told *The Daily Mail* columnist Richard Kay. ‘He was devastated.’ Meetings since then have been one degree above frosty. The first time Elizabeth agreed to be in the same place as her son’s lover—a party for the exiled king of Greece—she put out her hand, Parker Bowles curtsied and the queen moved on without saying a word.”

Sarah Lyall, writing last week in the *International Herald Tribune* from London about you know who. There is only one problem with the report. It is totally wrong. I don’t know Sarah Lyall, but she’s been in London long enough to know better than to use the phrase “highly placed confidant of the prince.” It is a euphemism for making up a quote and attributing it to a highly placed confidant who doesn’t exist, a British tabloid habit since Rupert Murdoch came to town sometime in the ’70s.

Yours truly happened to be the only journalist present at the party for the king of Greece, where the queen supposedly agreed to be in the same place as Camilla for the first time, and if memory serves, the two chatted amiably and for quite a long time. (My friend John O’Sullivan told me the next day that my presence at the party was the equivalent of journalistic hell. “The only reporter there but unable to report.”) In fact, I sat at Camilla’s table and got drunk enough to drop a game-saving ball at the cricket match that followed.

Mind you, what is a reporter like Lyall to do? She does not have access to the royals, just their spokesmen, and relies

on other hacks for her dispatches from rainy old London. Prince Charles’s strained relationship with his mother is an ongoing story exploited daily by tabloid newspapers locked in a circulation fight to the finish. The truth, however, is somewhere in between.

The queen is not feuding with her son. Quite the contrary. But Buckingham Palace is perennially feuding with Clarence House, which is to say the queen’s courtiers and advisors are fighting over royal turf with Charles’s courtiers and advisors. The two sides plant stories to suit their own agendas, the tabloids (even the broadsheets are now tabloids in Britain, except for the Telegraph Group) go ape, and the truth gets lost somewhere in translation.

The latest brouhaha is of course the mishandling of Charles’s wedding to Camilla on April 8. It has turned into a farce by which antimonarchists hope to score republican points against a much-maligned royal family that enjoys tremendous popularity among British subjects except for the Fourth Estate, the so-called chattering classes, left-wing academics, artsy-fartsy types, show-business folk, and assorted busybodies. According to the hysterical press, Camilla is dismayed, devastated, and bewildered. (Humiliated, battered, incandescent, furious, and so on.)

Here’s what’s really going on—at least according to “a highly placed confidant.” Just kidding. My info comes from friends of the couple, which include her brother Mark Shand, her son Tom Parker Bowles, and close buddies of the Prince of Wales. There is no rift

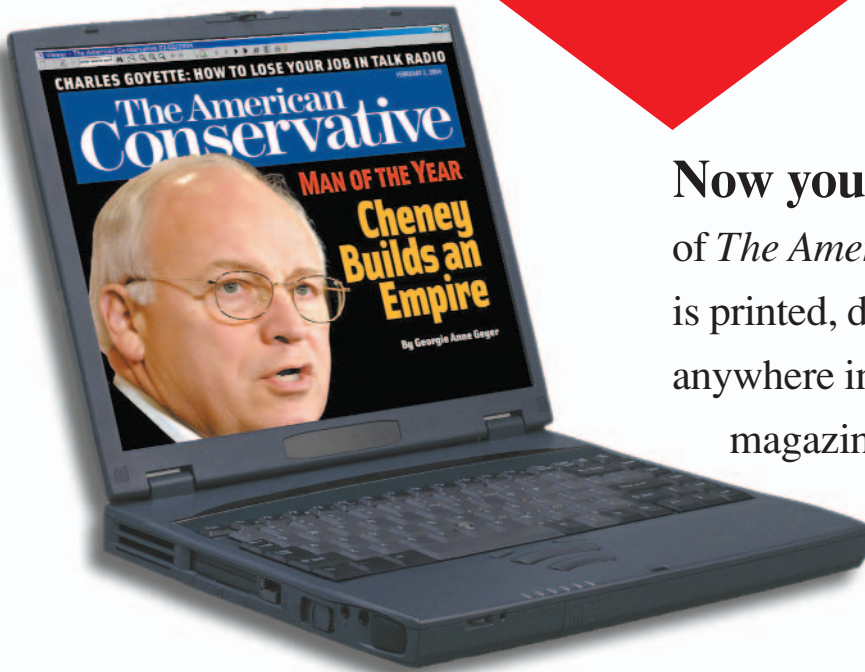
between Charles and the queen nor does Prince Philip bully his son and call him a wimp. The family is a typically British upper-class clan that shows little emotion in public, or in private for that matter, never explains or complains. Like the rest of the aristocracy, the family practices emotional distancing, something the vulnerable and willful Diana could not cope with.

The reason for the fiasco is a lawyer, one Charlie Falconer, once upon a time a flatmate of Tony Blair’s. Blair ennobled Charlie and named him Lord Chancellor. Like our very own Robert McNamara, failure after failure has served Charlie Falconer extremely well. It was Falconer who gave mixed signals about the legality of the royal wedding, and it’s Falconer who is playing a canny game assisting the royal haters. He wishes to abolish the already emasculated House of Lords and, eventually, the monarchy. Falconer only tried for elective office once and, having failed rather miserably, decided to rely on something even more deeply rooted in British history than royalty, patronage. Blair took care of the rest.

The Millennium Dome, a multibillion-pound disaster; the war in Iraq; and now the marriage arrangement can all be traced to Charlie—a real piece of work as they say stateside. Disaffection with the Prince of Wales seems to have never been so voluble. The usual suspects are to blame. They are even clamoring for Prince William to be the next king.

I am no friend of Prince Charles—we even got into an argument over race following an attack on my person by three West Indians in London ten years ago—but he will be the next king barring an act of God. *TAC* readers may not give a damn but at least shouldn’t fall for that highly placed confidant garbage. ■

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